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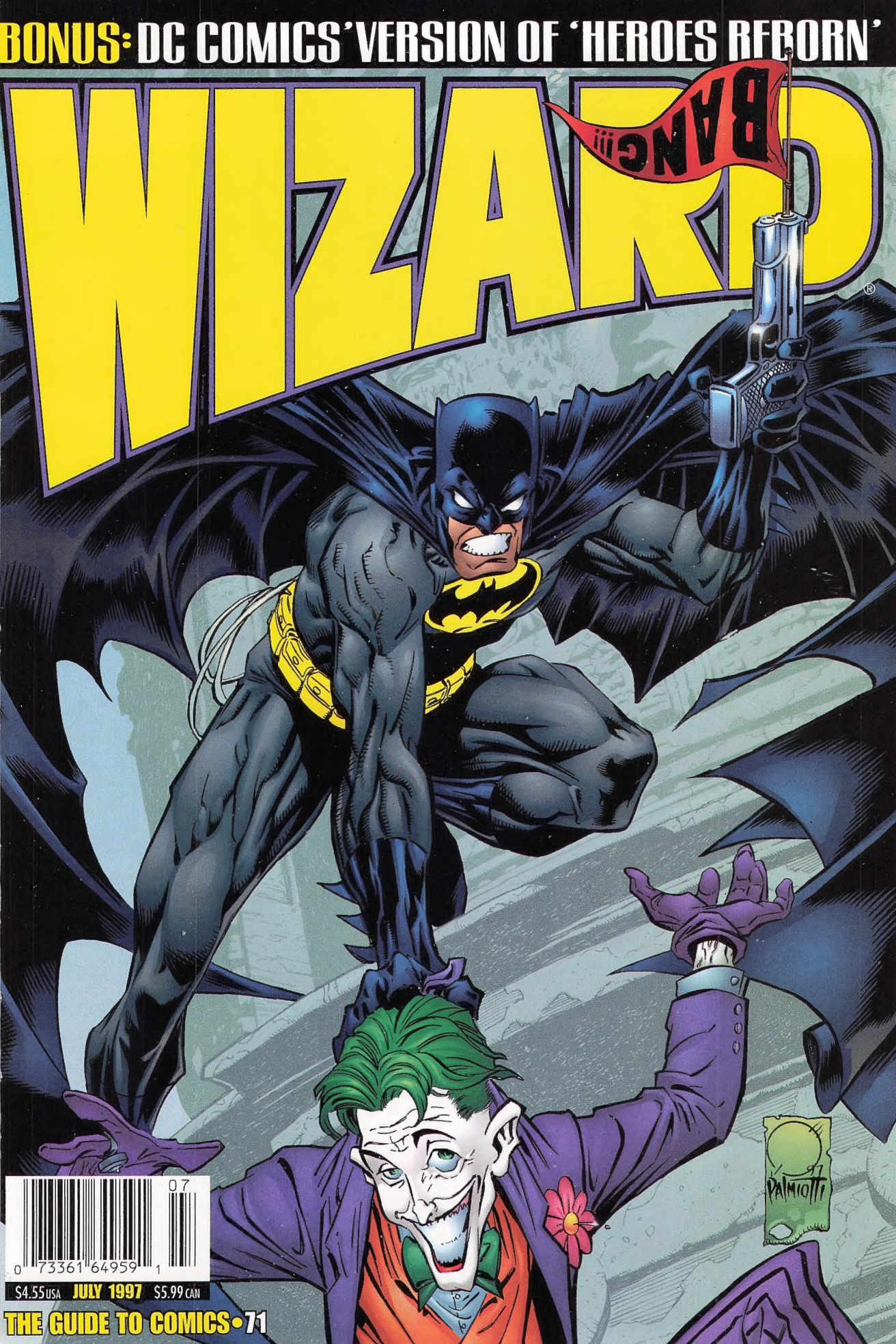

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THE GUIDE TO COMICS • 71

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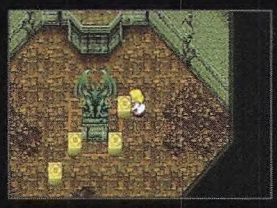

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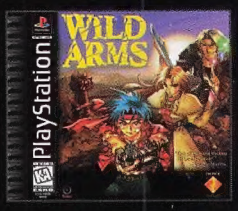

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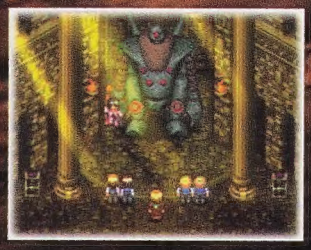

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ON THE COVER
Batman was illustrated by Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti, and colored by Liquid Graphics. To see who we think the mysterious villain Holiday from *Batman: The Long Halloween* really is, sneak to **page 34.**

Preacher was illustrated by Glenn Fabry. Flip to **page 30** to see if *Preacher* has successfully filled the top Vertigo slot left by *Sandman*'s passing.

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146 SLEEPWALKING
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Paul Schiraldi

EXCLUSIVE

Here's your only chance to get the exclusive *Tales of the Witchblade* #1/2 comic, which spotlights a different holder of the Witchblade gauntlet in a tale by Christina Z., David Wohl and Nathan Cabrera. Jump to page 80 for details.

#1/2 OFFER

"NOW DO YOU BELIEVE ME THAT SHE SAID 'YES'?"

MARRIAGE MADNESS

Well, it finally happened. I got married. It was truly the best day of my life. From start to finish, everything went perfectly. I didn't even have any jitters! The food was excellent and everybody hit the dance floor. Boy, did Jim McLauchlin look funny dancing. He was a few over the limit…but as he said, "Open bar, what the hell?"

Oh yeah, I can't say too much about my bachelor party except that it was really funny when Jimmy Palmiotti and Joe Quesada put this [redacted] inside of the [redacted] and nearly hit her [redacted] Then Nelson took over and put his [redacted] over the [redacted] Whew, you just had to be there…

Anyway, back to comics.

We're moving into the high season for comics: summer. There's lots happening—new releases, new toys, action films, conventions, etc. Here's a list of the things any true comics fan should do:

See the Spawn and Batman movies;

Go to the Chicago Comicon July 4th weekend;

Check out Wizard, Marvel and DC on AOL;

Buy the new line of Toy Biz figures;

Buy *Preacher*, *Astro City* and the list goes on and on…

In this month's *Wizard*, we have the Queen of all offers: *Tales of the Witchblade* #1/2. This one is gonna fly. We also have a hot Vampi Chromium card and a highly requested Deadpool poster.

We're also getting ready for the Batman movie with a Joe Quesada cover and a feature on the really cool *Batman: A Long Halloween* mini-series, where we try to deduce exactly who the villain Holiday is! We talk about my favorite book in this ish, *Preacher*, where we compare this hot Vertigo title to the former King of Vertigo, *Sandman*. We've also got a Q&A with hot writer Kurt Busiek, a massive summer reading guide looking at 50 of your favorite titles, and an incredible feature spotlighting the Top 10 Amalgams we'd like to see. The artists did a great job on that one. So enjoy it!

See ya next month in Chicago.

Gareb S. Shamus

P.S. We've got *ToyFare* #1 in July with a Bullseye toy offer. We've also got a Top Cow Special in July with a free comic in the bag.

ABC AUDITED

THE WIZARD GUILTY PARTIES

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Preacher Cover Art Glenn Fabry

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Stuff you don't ever read...

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MAGIC WORDS

Look, Ma! No Pants!

Lots o' common themes in this month's mail. They include, in no particular order: the Superman revamp (everyone's got an opinion, and most of 'em are negative), the dead X-character Blink (Hot dammit, but people love her!) and the infamous John Pading (see below). In fact, let's get right into that Pading guy and do some house-cleaning...

Dear Jim,

With all the mail you're getting on John Pading and his infamous "Dork Aptitude Test" (from *Wizard* #64's "Magic Words"), we've lost sight of one very important fact: We are ALL dorks!

Why get angry with Mr. Pading for pointing this out? Think about it: We read comics, play role-playing games, love sci-fi and read *Wizard*. I bet if "Star Wars on Ice" came around, you'd get at least a dozen letters on the beauty and grace with which the mighty Boba Fett performed a double-axel while firing his blaster at Han Solo. Please, Jim, don't get too locked in on this issue and run monthly Pading-bashing comments. Let's just move along.

Doug Frye
dfrye@indiana.edu

Consider us moved along. Mr. Pading may have been a bit...acerbic in his method of pointing out we're all a batch of dorks, but the essence of his statement is true: Comic readers are, at their core, dorks.

I mean, I've seen people argue the finer points of Wolverine's origin or debate the metaphorical significance of Sin City for hours. In fact, I've been one of those people (sometimes). That's just not normal behavior.

And I fear you're right, Doug. Were there ever a (shudder) "Star Wars on Ice," I'm sure I'd see letters on all the nasty ways it deviated from the original movies. Yeah, we're all dorks, and so what? There's nothing to be ashamed of there. The key is not to feel self-conscious about it, and especially not so self-conscious that you have to go and create a "Dork Aptitude Test" just to make yourself feel better about your own dorkiness.

So let's just crown Pading the King Dork and be done with it.

Dear Wizard,

Why do you always make fun of or criticize everything and everybody in the comic book world? I would like a real answer for once!

My point is that your jokes get old and tired. Sometimes you get me so irritated. I'm not saying to be serious all the time, because some of your jokes make me bust out laughing. I'm not saying I hate "Magic Words"; I'm just saying I dislike the way you deal with some of the letters.

Rick Buswell
Caryville, FL

It's like this: We try to find a balance in what we write. If all we wrote were straight answers, we'd come across like an algebra textbook and no one would read us. If all we did was heckle letter writers, I'd like reading Wizard, but I'd probably be the only one. I think in every issue, you get a good dose of hard-core information and a good dose of humor. Heck, in this very column, you'll find out more about Citizen V than you've ever known before, and you'll find out how I pick up women.

I think the balance works. I think you like it yourself. After all, you admitted that some of our jokes make you "bust out laughing." So grin and bear it. 'Cause unless it stops working, that's the way we operate.

Photo by Christine Loss

Dear Wizard,

Do you think that fans of the Batman films will finally get tired of shallow plots and overhyped, over-glamorized, overpaid actors in this summer's "Batman & Robin" travesty? Or will they flock to theaters and

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pay $7.00 to see this garbage?

Kevin Terry
Berea, KY

They will undoubtedly flock to theaters and pay $7.00 to see it. Why? It's like this: Maybe 100 thousand people a month read the* Batman *comic. Maybe 100 million people worldwide see the movies. If you're Warner Bros. Films, who are you going to cater to? The 100 thousand* Batman *readers or 100 million moviegoers? You guessed it. Are things like Arnold Schwarzenegger yelling, "Kill da heerozz!" and Robin exclaiming, "It's a hockey team from Hell!" things you'd find in a* Batman *comic? Nope. But to the 99,900,000 people who don't read comics, they're just great. Those people are just looking for a two-hour diversion with neat special effects and their favorite, big-name actors. That's just what they'll get, and that's why you'll never see a comic-based movie you like.

Dear Wiz,

As we all know, there are two Captain Marvels. One is done by DC Comics (although it originated at Fawcett Comics), and the other was launched in the late '60s by Marvel Comics. My question: Was there any battle over two superheroes with the same name? I think if this were to happen today, there would surely be a huge court battle.

Rob Hoskins
Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, Canada

Grab a chair. This might take a while. The real battle was between DC Comics, publisher of the wildly popular Superman character, and Fawcett Comics, publisher of the wildly popular Captain Marvel character. In 1941, DC cited the many similarities between the characters to make a case that Captain Marvel was a simple Superman rip-off. Finally, in 1953 and after a protracted legal battle, DC and Fawcett came to an out-of-court settlement. Fawcett ceased publication of its Captain Marvel titles.

Come 1968, Marvel Comics realized that there was no Captain Marvel comic title. Since it was named Marvel, the company figured it'd like to start one. So a new Captain Marvel character made his debut in* Marvel Super-Heroes *#12 in 1967, and was given his own title with* Captain Marvel *#1 in 1968. Marvel Comics trademarked the "Captain Marvel" title.

Even though Fawcett had let the trademark for the title "Captain Marvel" lapse, they still owned the likeness. So in 1973, DC came back and licensed the Fawcett "Captain Marvel" for publication. Since Marvel Comics had trademarked the "Captain Marvel" title, DC had to call their title* Shazam!*, even though, ironically enough, it starred the original Captain Marvel.

In the early '90s, DC bought the original Captain Marvel outright and today publishes* The Power of Shazam! *Provided it does not prominently display the words "Captain Marvel" on its covers, it's okay for DC to use a "Captain Marvel" character, as it's bought the name and likeness of the original Captain Marvel (although not the title, as it was not the company's to sell) from

THE BUNNY AWARD

be afraid

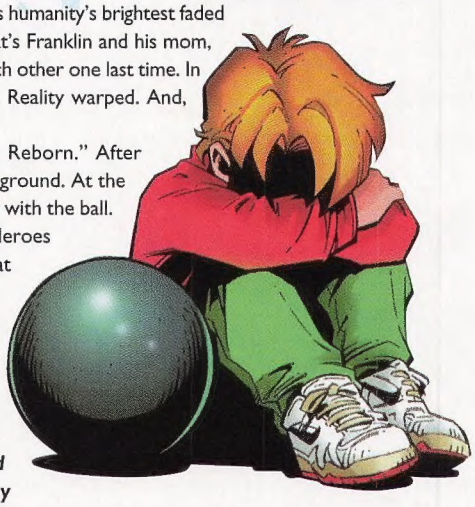
Paul Schiraldi

Jim takes one of his favorite letters of the month and spotlights it here. There's no logic attached to this, nor is there a prize.

Dear Jim,

In *Onslaught: Marvel Universe*, we are treated to Uatu the Watcher narrating the conclusion of the "Onslaught" storyline. In this comic, as X-Man and Franklin Richards fall from the sky and the heroes sacrifice themselves, Uatu says, "...one small boy, with hope enough for the world entire, would not allow this. As humanity's brightest faded from existence, mother and son [that's Franklin and his mom, the Invisible Woman] grasped for each other one last time. In that moment, time and space froze. Reality warped. And, perhaps, hope was reborn."

That's "reborn," as in "Heroes Reborn." After that, we see a small blue ball on the ground. At the end of the issue, Franklin walks away with the ball. I'm sure that Franklin created the "Heroes Reborn" universe, and it's inside that ball! Please tell me if I am right!



Jon Holmes
Jacksonville, FL

Hey! That's some pretty good detective work. My best guess is that you're dead-on right. Unfortunately, all the tight-lipped publicity guys at Marvel would say is that you should check out September's* Heroes Return *mini-series for the final answer.

So I tried Adam Kubert, the man who penciled* Onslaught: Marvel Universe. *He said, "All the clues you need to figure out the 'Heroes Reborn' universe are in* Onslaught: Marvel Universe. *But beyond that, I'm saying nothing."

Hmmm. Sometimes silence is an answer, y'know....

Fawcett. Whew!

And for those of you looking to visit Rob in Moose Jaw, I can assure you that it's easy to find. It's just six feet from the moose's ass.

Dear Wizard,

In which comic did Purgatori first appear?

Richard Sharpe
Annapolis, MD

***Purgatori, that batty ol' Chaos! Comics vampire, first appeared in* Evil Ernie: Revenge! *#1. You can see her origin reprised and reprinted in the* Lady Death vs. Purgatori *Ace Edition, a retail premium released in conjunction with this very issue of* Wizard.**

Dear Jim,

What the heck is Alan Moore's *Big Numbers*? I've heard of it, but I've never seen it. Is it a comic? Who publishes it? And what are Alan Moore's future plans? Will he continue working on *Supreme*?

Justin Hunter
Newhall, CA

***Big Numbers* is a creator-owned series by Alan Moore that was intended to run for 12 issues. Moore published only the first two issues under his own "Mad Love" imprint, but he says, "Due to various reasons, the artists involved couldn't commit to the book. It looks very unlikely that it will ever be finished." That is, at least in comics format. Moore is currently negotiating with a British television producer to bring a "Big Numbers" show to the small screen in 12 one-hour episodes.**

As for Moore's future plans, he says he's "quite getting into the groove on Supreme." He's also writing Judgment Day for Maximum Press, and then doing outlines and a year's worth of continuity for all the Maximum titles. He says he'll "be steering the Maximum line and acting as a consultant to some degree" by the time all is said and done there.

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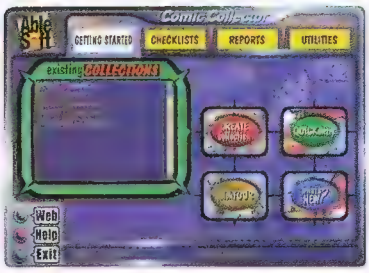

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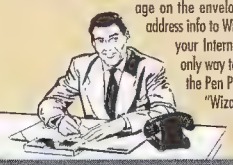
Hey! It's Pen Pals

Send your name, address, age, gender and three favorite titles to Pen Pals, c/o the "Magic Words" address on the last page of "Magic Words" (put your age on the envelope) or e-mail your regular address info to WizMarc@aol.com. If you want your Internet address listed instead, the only way to do this is to post your info in the Pen Pals board on America Online's "Wizard World" forum (keyword: Wizard; look in the Wizard Bulletin Board).



PEN PALS

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Fremont, CA 94536
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Van Horne, IA 52346
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Likes: *Generation X*, all other X-titles

Angie Hanson
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Marysville, OH 43040
Likes: *X-Men*, *Generation X*, *Elfquest*

Edward Yi
Age: 19 Sex: Male
253 East Summit St.
Sauderton, PA 18964
Likes: *X-Men*, *Batman*, *Fantastic Four*

Shawn Connolly
Age: 19 Sex: Male
187 Bellevue
Hudson, Quebec, Canada J0P 1H0
Likes: *X-Files*, *Preacher*, *Kingdom Come*

Dear Wizard,
Hey! I ran across another clue that leads me to believe that Tom Peyer (writer of *Legion of Super-Heroes* and *Magnus*) is dead, as a reader in *Wizard* #66's "Magic Words" theorized. As I read *Wizard* #68, I noticed Mr. Peyer was number nine on the "Top 10 Writers" list. As we all know, "Revolution 9" by the Beatles contained the lyric "number nine, number nine" repeated over and over, and when that lyric is played backward, it says "Turn me on, dead man." This was another clue that the Beatles planted to let people know that Paul McCartney was dead. I think I've found another *Wizard* clue that lets us know Tom Peyer is dead.

Ray Molly
Hartford, CT

Once again, I got Tom Peyer (or at least someone claiming to be him) on the phone. His only answer to this letter? A rather cryptic "No comment. I can neither confirm nor deny my death."

Personally, I think Tom is alive, well, and currently writing* Marvel Team-Up. *But who knows? Maybe in the great comic character tradition, Tom has died and come back to life. After all, this is the only business where you can die and then get better.

Dear Wizard,
I just picked up *Thunderbolts* #1 and I have a few questions:

1) The name of the character Citizen V: Is it pronounced Citizen "five" as in the number or Citizen "V" as in the letter?

2) What comic book was the original Citizen V in?

3) What comic books have the Masters of Evil appeared in? Who did they fight?

4) Has Mark Bagley done any covers for *Wizard*?

Marc Seyers
wseyers@msn.com

I just picked up* Thunderbolts #1 *and I have a few answers:

***1) It's pronounced "Vee" as in the letter, as Citizen V himself tells us on page seven of* Thunderbolts #1.**

2) According to Marvel House of Ideas PR Overlord Ben Cramer, the Golden Age Citizen V appeared in* Daring Mystery Comics #8 *and* Comedy Comics #9, *both published in 1942. Completists take note!

***3) The Masters of Evil have been battling the Avengers ever since their first appearance in* Avengers #6 *(1964). A massive MoE story in which the superbaddies really do a number on Earth's Mightiest Heroes can be found in* Avengers #273-#277.**

***4) Yep. The former* Amazing Spider-Man *artist did Spidey vs. the Hobgoblin and Spidey vs. the Green Goblin for* Wizard #26.**

Dear Wizard,
Did Blink, who I saw in Marvel's "Age of Apocalypse" story, ever exist in the "real" Marvel Universe?

Jesse Rhoades
Altoona, PA

***Oh, yeah. We kinda blew the call in issue #67's "Top 10 Heroes and Villains," but for the record, Blink has appeared in "real" Marvel Universe stories, most notably in the "Phalanx Covenant" and "Generation Next" crossovers. She was killed off, much to the displeasure of Blinkophiles everywhere, in* X-Men (vol. 2) #37.**

Dear Wizard.
What do J. Scott Campbell's friends and family call him? Do they call him J? Or Scott? Maybe Jeff? Let me know.

Benjamin Woo
Rurik10086@aol.com

We called Mr. Jeffrey Scott Campbell, who said, "Friends and family from back home in Colorado call me Scott. But since I moved to California, everyone here calls me Jeff. It's very confusing."

I guess that means that somewhere in Nevada, they call him "Sceff." Or maybe "Jott."

Dear Wizard,
A few days ago, I saw a "Batman: The Animated Series" episode with an Old West-type character named Jonah Hex. I liked the character. I was wondering if the writers of the show made him up, or if he's an existing DC character. Are there any comic series starring him? Are there any future plans for Jonah Hex?

Andy Johnson
lampotus@aol.com

He's an existing DC Western character who's been the star of two ongoing titles and two mini-series in his time. The first title,* Jonah Hex, *ran 92 issues from 1977-1985 and led into his second ongoing, simply entitled* Hex. *Hoo boy, was* Hex *bad. They took a bitter old gunfighter guy and put him in a bad, clichéd , post-apocalyptic future setting. With a motorcycle.* Hex *lasted 18 issues before it was mercifully put to sleep.

The stink from* Hex *was so bad that it took six years to wash off before Joe R. Lansdale and Tim Truman came along with two stellar Old West Vertigo mini-series,* Two-Gun Mojo *and* Riders of the Worm and Such. *Hex has

PENPALS

George West
Age: 22 Sex: Male
P.O. Box 9
Big Creek, KY 40914
Likes: *Spawn, Star Wars, X-Men*

Rashawn Belser
Age: 17 Sex: Male
368 Eastern Pkwy., Apt. 6D
Brooklyn, NY 11225
Likes: *Spawn, Wolverine, Uncanny X-Men*

Brien DeRosa
Age: 12 Sex: Male
72 Walnut Street
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Likes: *Fantastic Four, Gen^{13}*, X-titles

Mark Blumberg, 13/m
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Joe McIntosh, 20/m
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Gen^{13}, Teen Titans, X-titles

Emery Graham, 16/m
E-Esquire@juno.com
X-titles, Spider-titles, Gen^{13}

essentially been "adopted" by Vertigo, although there are no specific plans for the character currently on schedule.

Hey, Mr. McLauchlin,
I have a question. What do you *Wizard* people like to eat? It seems like every time I read your mag, there's always something about sushi, buffalo wings or liquor. Now granted, those are the staple foods of life. But do you eat anything else around there?

Michael Townes
Scottsdale, AZ

Actually, sushi, buffalo wings and liquor are but three of the five essential Wizard food groups. The others are processed meat snacks and whipped, flavored pig lard (like the filling found in Twinkies), both of which we ingest whenever possible.

Hey, Jim,
I know you do very well with the ladies. Could you give me some pointers on how to pick up women?

Adam Canafaz
Wichita Falls, TX

Conditioning is the key. I go to the gym three times a week and do squats to keep my legs in good shape for women-picking-up. I also usually try to do some quick stretching exercises right before I pick a woman up. It's also important to never let your reach exceed your grasp—know your limit as to how much you can pick up. Wear a lift belt if necessary.

And fer cryin' out loud, always lift with your legs, not with your back. You'll get yourself hurt otherwise.

That's about it for now. Think I'll go do squats for a while. Until next month, I remain...

—Jim McLauchlin

Jim McLauchlin, a 6-foot, 200-pound political science major out of UMD, led the Wizard Press team with 264 semicolons last year. He tied for team lead in paper clips used with 1,389.

Send letters to:
Magic Words
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Congers, NY 10920
or e-mail us at WizWords@AOL.Com

LETTER ART

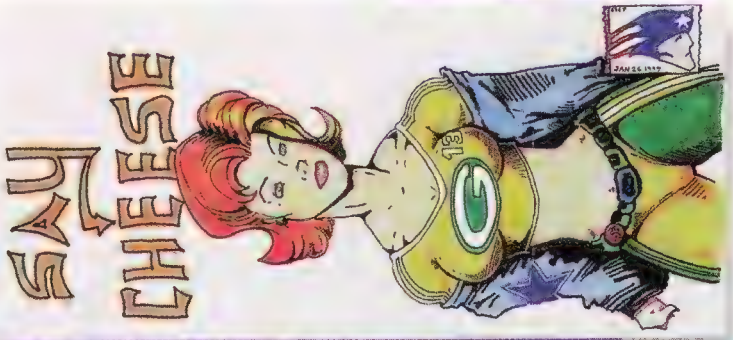
Fans who got their letter art printed this month will each receive a *Superman: The Man of Steel #67* signed by Jon Bogdanove and an *Adventures of Superman #546* signed by Stuart Immonen, plus a copy of this issue of *Wizard* signed by the entire *Wizard* creative staff, a snazzy *Wizard* T-shirt and a funky *Wizard* cap! The creator of the best envelope wins the signed comics, issue, shirt and cap, plus the ultraspiffy Superman '97 Luminescent Watch! (Thanks for all the goodies, DC, Jon and Stuart!) Artists: Please include a clearly printed return address **and a list of characters depicted** on the **back** of your envelope.

THE PRIZE

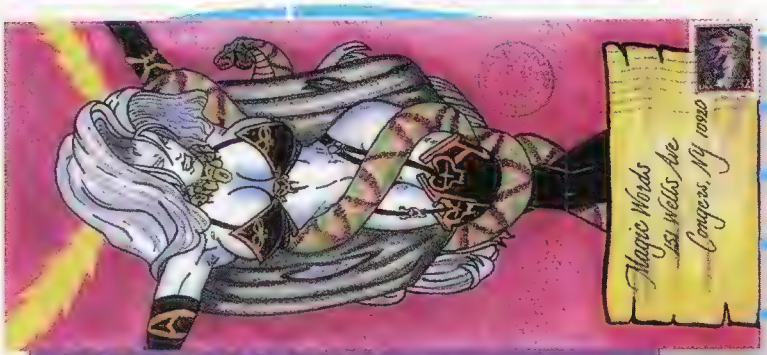
envelope of the month

PETER PARKER, SPIDER-MAN David Guivant [illegible]

FAIRCHILD #1 Eric Tan [illegible]

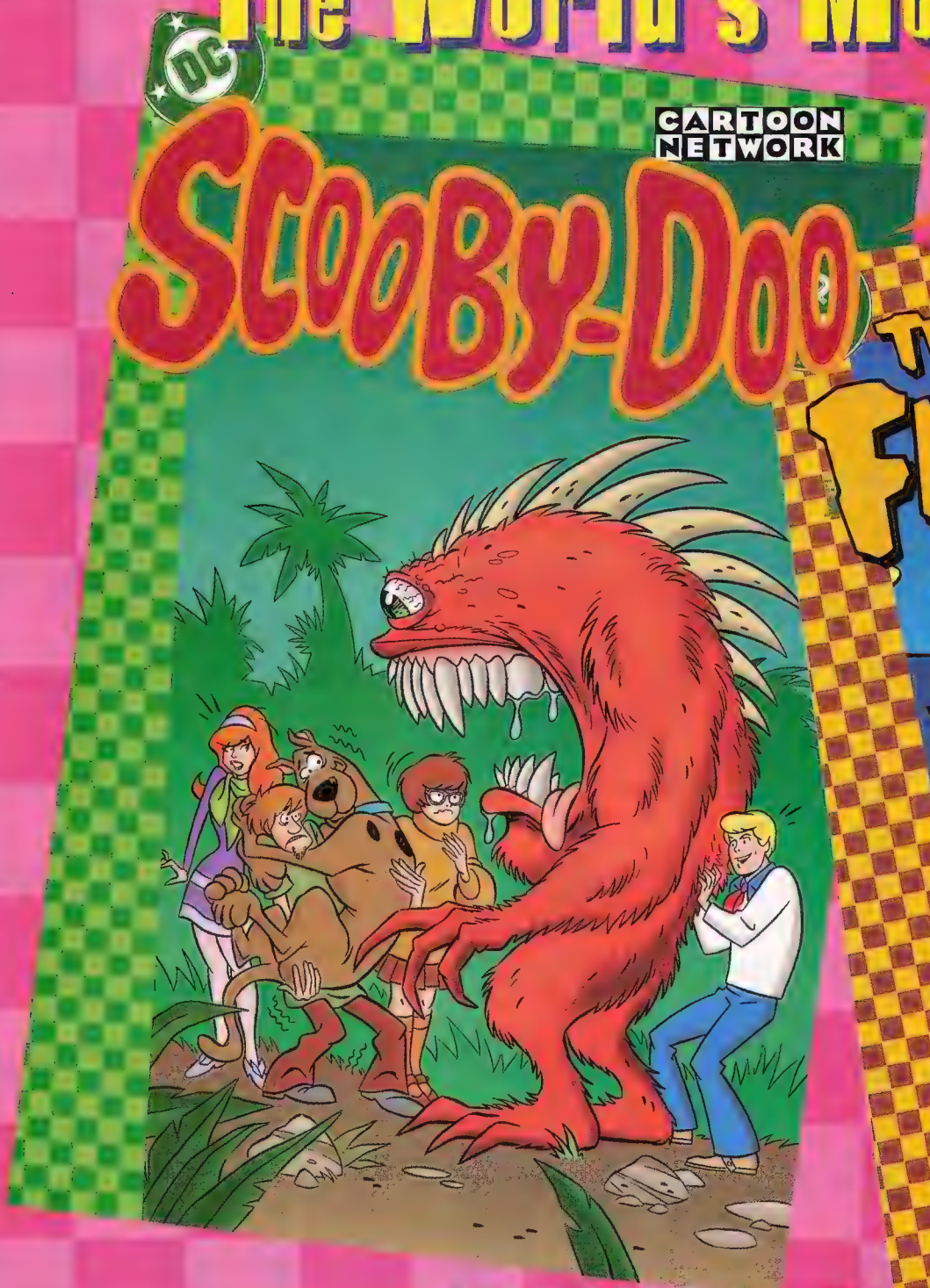


FAIRCHILD #2 Troy Gonzalez [illegible]



LADY DEATH Audra M. Crollins [illegible]

The World's Most



Monthly from DC Comics

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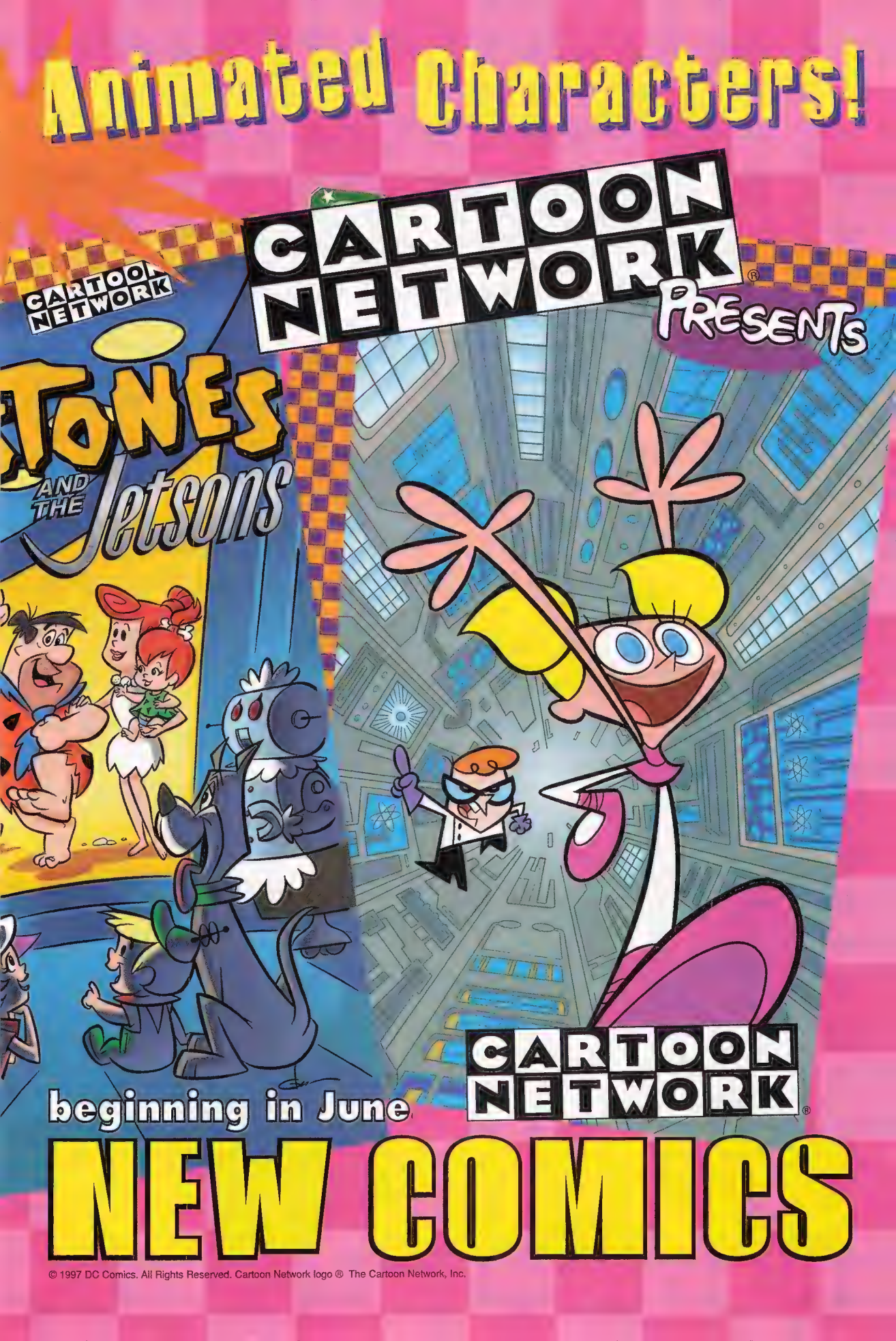

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DC to Introduce 'TANGENT UNIVERSE'

The Flash is a woman. Green Lantern is just an object, not a person. Sound bizarre? Not to DC Comics. All this and more will happen in **Tangent Comics**, a new project coming in October.

DC will publish nine one-shot comics the first week of October that take place in a separate, alternate universe called the "Tangent Universe." With a host of top-notch writing talent including **Dan Jurgens**, **Kurt Busiek** and **Ron Marz**, Tangent Comics will present new concepts based on nothing more than the *names* of established DC characters.

"What we're trying to do here is what Julie Schwartz got to do as a DC editor in the '50s when he restarted characters like the Flash in *Showcase* #4," said Dan Jurgens, creator of the Tangent Universe. "Back then, creators had the chance to take the names of superheroes—sometimes classics or even sometimes forgotten—that existed before and use them to rebuild, entirely from scratch, the kind of book they wanted. That's what we're doing now."

Jurgens created a 30-page "Bible" of the Tangent Universe, including a brief synopsis of all the characters' histories and the world's history, and passed one to each of the creators involved. The Tangent Universe is based on the premise that after the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, there was a nuclear exchange between the United States and the Soviet Union. The initial atomic strikes, which actually leveled Florida (making Atlanta the Southernmost major city in the U.S.), caused the outgrowth of superheroes in this alternate reality. "With that basic starting point, we assigned creators a title's name," said Eddie Berganza, Tangent Comics editor. "And they ran with it."

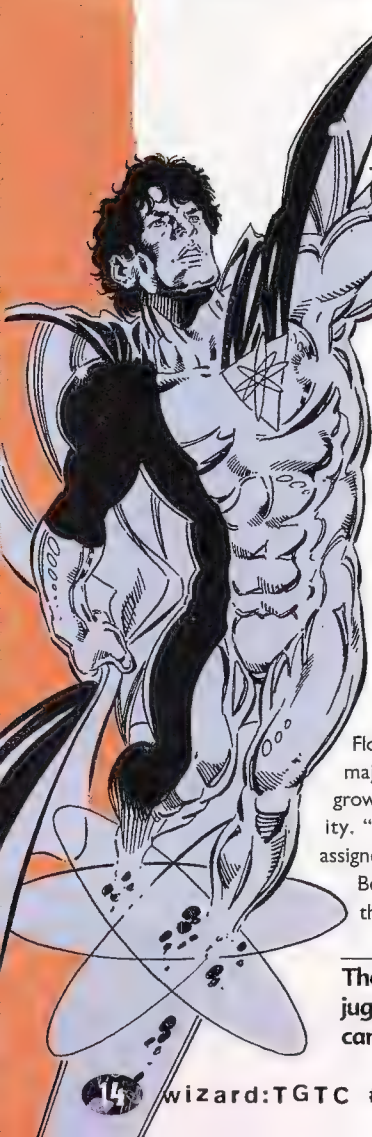
"The Tangent Universe is a very real and concrete world with its own set of superheroes," said Jurgens. "The basis for this world may seem dark or ominous, but the stories focus on the characters and are designed to be fun. While Nightwing will have a darker premise, the Joker is a lighthearted romp."

All Tangent stories are inter-connected and take place in the Tangent equivalent of 1997, 35 years after the nuclear exchange that changed the world. Here's a rundown of the titles:

• **The Atom** (Written and drawn by Dan Jurgens)—As a direct result of the nuclear exchange, the first superhero to emerge in the Tangent Universe was the Atom. Instead of having the ability to shrink, this world's Atom is a superpowered nuclear juggernaut. This book stars a third-generation Atom and his emergence into the public eye.

• **Doom Patrol** (Written by Dan Jurgens, penciled by Sean Chen, inked by Kevin Conrad)—Set in the middle of New York City, a band of people from the future come to warn the present about the end of the world. The futuristic travelers get laughed at and labeled the "Doom Patrol" because of their wild cataclysmic predictions. What no one seems to understand is that the Doom Patrol really does know the way the world will end...and how to prevent it.

• **The Flash** (Written by Todd Dezago, penciled by Gary



The Atom (left) is a nuclear juggernaut, while the Green Lantern can bring souls back from the dead

Frank, inked by Cam Smith)—In the mid-'80s on a manned U.S. space mission to Jupiter, a child is conceived. Through some unexplained phenomenon, a baby girl is born as living, sentient light. *The Flash* tells the adventures of this sprightly young woman who leads a very public life as a superheroine.

• **Green Lantern** (Written by James Robinson, penciled by J. H. Williams, inked by Mick Gray)—A mysterious Asian woman possesses a mystical Green Lantern. She walks through cemeteries, placing the Lantern on tombstones to bring those that died of great injustice back to life, allowing their spirits to right the wrong. *Green Lantern* contains three short stories of different people who have returned from the dead.

• **The Joker** (Written by Karl Kesel, penciled by Matt Haley, inked by Tom Simmons)—*The Joker* takes place in New Atlantis—the rebuilt Atlanta—and revolves around a female counter-culture leader. Since hippie culture and anti-Vietnam hysteria never happened in *this* world, our '60s counter-culture is just beginning to emerge in the Tangent Universe. The Joker appears to fight the establishment by ridiculing the accepted. But this mysterious character's hidden motivation is the crux of the story.

• **Metal Men** (Written by Ron Marz, penciled by Mike McKone, inked by Mark McKenna)—A "flashback" tale that takes place in 1969, *Metal Men* tells of the "iron men" of an elite American army company in the ground war in Europe that followed the 1962 nuclear exchange. The book shows where these men are in today's society and how fate has twisted these similar men with similar aspirations into different paths.

• **Nightwing** (Written by John Ostrander, penciled and inked by Jan Duursema)—Nightwing is a secret government organization that not even the U.S. President knows about. This clandestine group is involved in every dirty operation from the release of AIDS into the public to the JFK assassination. This book's story revolves around a select handful of Nightwing members and their ties to the current Presidential administration.

• **Sea Devils** (Written by Kurt Busiek, penciled by Vince Giaranno, inked by Tom Palmer) —Along the coast of New Atlantis, a new and mutated race of creatures, the Sea Devils, live beneath the sea. Humans don't think twice about killing these scary-looking sea-dwellers who are only trying to secure safety for their race.

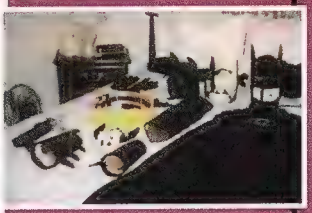
• **Secret Six** (Written by Chuck Dixon, penciled by Tom Grummett, inker to be determined)—As a paranoid Earth still experiences the Cold War, a handful of superheroes band together in secret to fight for truth, justice and the American way. Consisting of the Atom, the Flash, the Joker and three other members, the *Secret Six* is the story of the group's first mission as a team.

But after the nine one-shots in October, will there be more Tangent books on the horizon? "I don't know," said Berganza. "I think it'd be great to come back here on a yearly or quarterly basis. It all depends on whether the fans enjoy the new take on these heroes."

■ *Matthew Senreich*

The Joker (above) and Plastic Man are members of the Tangent superteam Secret Six

Comic fan fails to score. "I rented 'Barb Wire,' recited every member of the Defenders and then showed her my Hellina nude-variants. She just maced me and roofed my Psycho-Man lunchbox," wept doomed virgin.



Batman busted in motel scandal. "We kicked the door in and there he was with a team of midgets waxing his back. He screamed, tossed a midget at us and dove out a window," commented shaken cop. "An APB for a shiny backed nekkid man is underway."

Tourist mishap at Avengers Mansion claims life. "Ahhhh! The Pym Particles... they're wearing off! They're %$#@ing wearing off!" wailed ill-fated fan before being crushed to jelly.

ahead

CATWOMAN GETS NEW DUDS!

WIZARD BUYS CHICAGO CON!

AND COMPANY UPDATES!

Lee Launches New Title at Image

Just as his involvement in "Heroes Reborn" ends in August, creator **Jim Lee** launches his next big project.

WildStorm Productions has announced that Lee will launch a new comic, with the current working title *Faraday's Law*, in September. The ongoing series will take place within current WildStorm continuity, and Lee will both fully write and pencil for the first time. At press time, Lee was unsure of specifics, so all names are subject to change. *Faraday's Law* will be more fantasy-oriented than any of Lee's previous titles.

"I'm trying to do something akin to 'Dungeons & Dragons' to help redefine fantasy for the '90s," said Lee. "I'm also looking to make a long commitment to this book, with 20 issues minimum."

Jim Lee returns to penciling with new project

Photo by John T. Burr

Faraday's Law begins when a strange visitor leaves a mysterious computer file on a bulletin board to download. What nobody knows is that the downloadable document is actually the "Creation Equation," or the meaning of life. Twenty-year-old Max Faraday, a regular to this particular board, finds the mysterious document and downloads it, getting him involved in a battle between the forces of good and evil. Faraday finds himself on the run from a number of different government agencies, and even a batch of bizarre demon-like creatures. The intrigue increases when Faraday discovers that his love interest, a woman from an online chat room whom he's never met, may have also downloaded the same information, putting her life in danger as well. Faraday has to learn the secrets of the formula to unlock the power it holds.

"The better you understand the equation, the more you can do with it," said Lee. "This is an epic story between light and dark, and how Faraday becomes the protector of the universe." ■ *Matthew Senreich*

Kesel Runs Wild with New Access

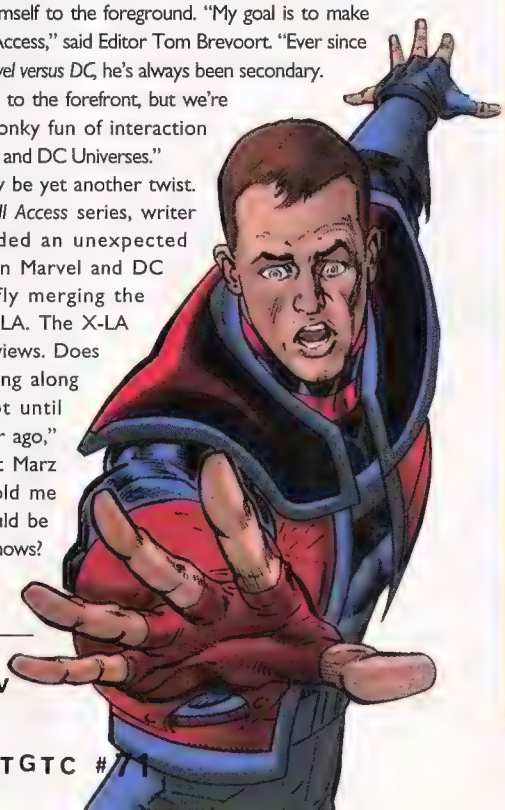
Writer **Karl Kesel** is doing exactly what he wants in the new four-issue ***All Access: Unlimited Access*** mini-series, starting in October from Marvel Comics. "I've got very uncommercial sensibilities," he said. "I'm going to throw Enemy Ace and the Phantom Eagle in there. We'll see if fans line up around the block to see that."

Appearances from World War II flying aces like these will be possible, as Access finds that not only can he travel between the DC and Marvel Universes, but he can also time travel. "But he's not too good at it," Kesel added. "He'll be going *back* in time, but he'll also be visiting the Legion of Super-Heroes and Marvel's 2099 [Universe]."

Despite Kesel's "uncommercial sensibilities," the payoff of the series has big marquee value: A battle royale between the original **Avengers** and the original **JLA**. "It'll be great," Kesel continued. "I can't wait to match Green Lantern's power ring [which is useless against anything yellow] versus the golden armored Iron Man."

In addition to the payoff of a big-bang Avengers/JLA tussle, *Unlimited Access* will bring Access himself to the foreground. "My goal is to make people care about Access," said Editor Tom Brevoort. "Ever since he appeared in *Marvel versus DC*, he's always been secondary. We're bringing him to the forefront, but we're still having the wonky fun of interaction between the Marvel and DC Universes."

And there may be yet another twist. In the previous *All Access* series, writer Ron Marz included an unexpected Amalgam between Marvel and DC characters, briefly merging the **X-Men** and the JLA. The X-LA played to rave reviews. Does Kesel plan anything along these lines? "Not until about half an hour ago," he chuckled. "But Marz just called and told me he thought it would be a cool idea. Who knows? I just might." ■ *Jim McLauchlin*



Access time travels in new mini-series

BUZZ BOX

The inside scoop on the comic industry

Claremont on the X-Men? Maybe. The principals involved ain't talkin', but Chris Claremont has been spendin' an awful lot of time at the Marvel offices. A Claremont-back-on-an-X-book rumor is traveling the circuit hot and heavy.

British Invasion! Word from across the pond is that Alan Moore (*Watchmen, Supreme*) and Kevin O'Neil (*Marshall Law*) are possibly gearing up for a creator-owned Homage Comics series in late '97.

Classic Spidey Team Reunites! Marvel Comics will gladly tell you that its got a 48-page Kingpin one-shot on the schedule for November. What those guys *won't* tell you is the creative team. But Buzz hears the book will be written by none other than Stan "The Man" Lee and penciled by "Jazzy" John Romita Sr., reuniting the old *Amazing Spider-Man* team!

DOUBLE-SECRET SPECIAL 'HEROES RETURN' BUZZ BOX!

The latest in "Heroes Return" gossip, innuendo and maybe even fact!

Launch Plans! When the four "Heroes Return" titles return, they will come back one per month. Insiders indicate that *Fantastic Four* will be the first to return in late September. *FF* will be followed a month later by *Captain America*, then *Iron Man* and finally *Avengers*.

Creative Teams! No signatures are on the dotted lines yet, but Marvel still has verbal working agreements with Kurt Busiek and George Pérez for *Avengers*, and Mark Waid and Ron Garney for *Captain America*.

Word on the street is that Scott Lobdell will write and Adam Kubert will pencil *Fantastic Four*. Marvel has a verbal agreement with Busiek to write *Iron Man*, but no penciler has yet been selected. Word is that Terry Dodson (*Mantra*) and Salvador Larroca (*Excalibur*) are contenders.

Odd God Out! There is no *Thor* title yet on the horizon, but Marvel would love to bring the Thunder God back in his own monthly sometime in early 1998. After seeing his work on the Amalgam book *Thorion and the New Asgods*, many Marvel sources say they'd love to see John Romita Jr. on a new *Thor* title. But Romita says he's remaining loyal to his post on *Peter Parker: Spider-Man*.

Catwoman Gets New Look

Everyone's favorite cat-burglar will be undergoing a transformation this summer.

DC Comics has announced that its *femme fatale* **Catwoman** is donning a new costume in August's *Catwoman* #50. The double-length story, written by **Doug Moench** and penciled by **Jim Balent,** introduces changes in the character that go well beyond the cosmetic.

"The story will do much more than just reveal Catwoman's new costume," said Moench. "It will hopefully redefine the character as well."

Catwoman #50 features the return of Cyber Cat and her quest for revenge on Catwoman. As the story begins, Cyber Cat ambushes Catwoman and beats her within an inch of her life. Catwoman feels the necessity for greater protection, sparking the new outfit.

"The costume will be beefed up, almost Cyber-Cat-like, with gadgets like a retractable whip that comes out of her arm," said Balent. "Her costume will be metal as opposed to the old cloth, and will even have extendible metal claws."

In addition, *Catwoman* #50 also focuses on the secret identity side of Catwoman—Selina Kyle. Selina's been a very private person who hasn't really opened herself up to many people. "There's a lot of soul-searching going on," said Balent, "and a lot of it will deal with McShane, the Gotham police officer who's been assigned to bring Catwoman to justice."

And the soul-searching leads to something more. "In *Catwoman* #51-#53, there will be a romance between McShane and Selina," said Moench. "And at the end of issue #53, a shocking surprise will be revealed."

Catwoman #53 also represents Moench's swan song, his final issue as *Catwoman* writer. The changes in Catwoman's life lead to a new writer, Devin Grayson (*Catwoman Annual* #4), with issue #54. ■ *Matthew Senreich*

Catwoman gets pumped up with her new costume and gadgets

Dragon Turns Five in July

Erik Larsen isn't big on parties or birthday cake. "My plan for this fifth anniversary," he said, "is to stay alive and make it to the sixth anniversary." Still, the Image Comics publication of Larsen's *Savage Dragon* hits the five-year mark with #40, and Larsen is celebrating with a pair of two-issue mini-series in July.

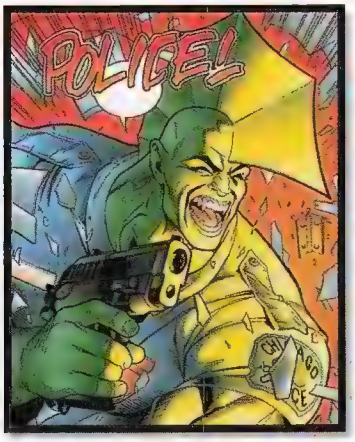
Savage Dragon/Marshall Law is written and drawn by *Marshall Law* creators Pat Mills and Kevin O'Neil. In it, the Dragon teams up with the futuristic, excessively violent cop Marshall Law (from Marvel/Epic's 1987-1989, six-issue mini-series) and travels to the future to help Marshall Law foil a crime that involves members of the Savage Dragon cast. Larsen points out that fans will get to see the eventual fates of many of their favorite characters.

"All the characters that you're familiar with are in this bizarre *Marshall Law*-type future and you get to see what they've become," said Larsen.

Meanwhile, *Savage Dragon: Sex and Violence* is a mini-series Larsen designed specifically for fan-favorite artist Adam Hughes. Larsen writes and Rick Mays does finishes over Hughes' layouts. *Sex and Violence* features a dark look at the Chicago underworld, and introduces Jennifer Murphy, a new and important character in *Dragon* lore that will carry over to the ongoing series.

"I was looking for a way to bring in the woman who was the Dragon's wife in my old *Megaton* version of the Dragon," said Larsen. "This character will be key in the future."

Both of these mini-series take place in continuity just prior to *Savage Dragon* #40 and will become essential parts of the Dragon mythos. ■ *Matthew Senreich*



Artist Adam Hughes takes a shot at Dragon in July

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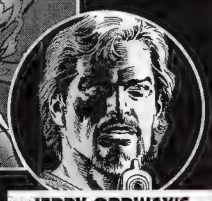

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New Comic Venture is Totally Awesome

Rob Liefeld, Jeph Loeb and Scott Rosenberg have awesome plans for comics with Awesome Entertainment.

"Rob is the creative force, Scott handles the finances and my job is production of the material," said Loeb, publisher and executive vice-president of Awesome Entertainment.

Liefeld (publisher of Maximum Press), Loeb (writer of ***Iron Man*** and *Batman: The Long Halloween*) and Rosenberg (former president of Malibu Comics) will publish comics to use as stepping stones to film, television, interactive games and toys. With Liefeld's first issue of the three-issue *Judgment Day* mini-series in late May, all Maximum Press titles will shift to the Awesome Entertainment banner.

"I like to think we're like Dark Horse in terms of understanding that comics translate really well into other mediums," said Loeb. "The idea is to create new things out of old ones."

With the formation of Awesome Entertainment, Maximum Press (including titles such as *Glory* and *NewMen*) will go on publishing hiatus. "The only book from Maximum that will remain untouched is ***Supreme***," said Loeb. "*Supreme* is the glue that holds the old universe and the new universe together. Outside of *Supreme*, we're looking to run no more than four books a month, and most of these new books will be mini-series that lead into the next mini-series and so on."

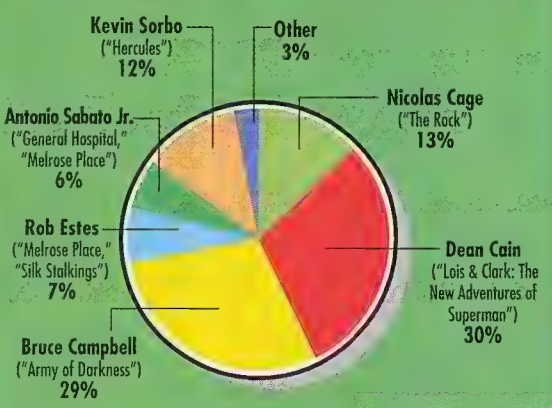
The current production schedule for Awesome Entertainment is: *Judgment Day* #1 in May, *Supreme* #50 and *Judgment Day* #2 and #3 in June, the launch of the three-issue mini-series *Agent: America* written by Loeb and penciled by Liefeld in July, and the launch of the four-issue mini-series *The Coven* written by Loeb and penciled by Ian Churchill later in the summer. ■ *Matthew Senreich*

Liefeld's *Agent: America* kicks off in June

QUESTION OF THE MONTH

Nicolas Cage as Superman? Word has it that Cage is up for the new Superman film, currently slated for a summer 1998 release. But just like the 1989 announcement of the "Batman" movie casting of Michael Keaton as the Dark Knight, fan reaction's been mixed. So we decided to use our Wizard World forum on American Online to ask the online fans of America:

WHO WOULD MAKE THE BEST "BIG SCREEN" SUPERMAN?



It doesn't look like the fans are in Cage's corner. "Nicolas Cage doesn't have the hair or face to be Superman," posted one annoyed fan. However, the 13 percent that *did* vote for him rightly pointed out that "Cage can act. And with makeup these days, he will look like Superman! Besides, have you noticed how buff he's looking these days?"

Overwhelmingly, fans don't understand why Dean Cain, TV's Superman from "Lois & Clark: The Adventures of Superman," isn't the obvious choice. "You'd think Cain would be asked to play Supes in the movie because he's the one we all recognize," said one fan. "In the eyes of this generation, he is Superman."

Other notable suggestions tossed out by our online friends were Johnny Depp, Matthew Perry, Harrison Ford and the American Gladiator, Laser. ■ *Sorrell Booke*

Xeric Helps New Creators

Are you a self-publishing comic creator looking for financial support? Well, buck up, little camper. Peter Laird, co-creator of ***Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles***, is willing to help.

Every six months, Laird's **Xeric Foundation** offers grants to aspiring comic book creators who meet the technical merit and creativity criteria of its anonymous selection panel. Since Laird established the Foundation in 1992, it has awarded over $415,000 to fledgling comic creators.

The next deadline to apply for a Xeric Foundation grant is July 31, 1997. Recipients of grants will be notified on or around September 1, 1997. Previous winners of the grant include Adrian Tomine (*Optic Nerve*) and Linda Medley (*Castle Waiting*).

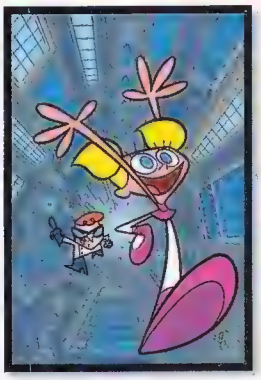
For applications and information on what materials to supply for the grant, write: Xeric Foundation, 351 Pleasant Street, Box 214, Northampton, MA 01060 or e-mail xericgrant@aol.com. ■ *Matthew Senreich*

we LOOKED it up

Mad•u•rei•ra (mad a RARE uh), Joseph C. *n.* 1974-present **1** manga-influenced artist of Marvel Comics *Uncanny X-Men* **2** artist who has been drawing comics professionally since he was 16 years old **3** Italian exclamation of disgust uttered by pizza shop owners when they toss dough into the air and drop it on the floor

Comics Get Kid Friendly

The future of comics? If you ask **Marvel**, DC or Acclaim Comics, they'll tell you it falls to bringing in new, younger readers. So all three publishers have announced plans for lines of comics aimed at the under-12 crowd.



From Left: ***Cartoon Network Presents, Flintstones/Jetsons* and *Scooby-Doo***

First out of the blocks is DC's **Cartoon Network** line, where three titles—*Flintstones/Jetsons, Scooby-Doo* and *Cartoon Network Presents*—all debut in June with a $1.75 cover price. Editor Bronwyn Taggart stressed that, despite the cartoon theme, these comics *aren't* just for kids.

"We're bringing in alternative artists and writers who can bring a fresh approach to the material, who can write stuff that operates on both an adult and a kid level," she said.

Meanwhile, Acclaim is approaching the youth market differently, packaging its new "Acclaim Young Readers" line in bookstore-friendly digest size at $4.95. Leading the way in Acclaim's YR list are **Disney** titles, starting with a release tied to the animated "Hercules" movie in June, followed by the monthly *Disney's Enchanting Stories* and *Disney's Adventure Club* in July. Later in the year, Acclaim will add titles based on Saban and Fox Kids Network properties, including ***The Tick***.

Industry leader Marvel Comics is not to be left out either. Editor Jackie Carter says Marvel's kids line won't see fruition until 1998, and will focus on existing Marvel characters, not properties owned by others. Carter explained, "We want to make recognizable Marvel characters more accessible to younger kids. We're looking at developing a line of more family oriented comic books."

Taggart agreed that developing comics for the whole family is an important goal: "I think we have to redevelop the younger audience, without abandoning the older readers we've been selling to for the past couple of decades. I know a lot of the other publishers are working on similar ideas, and I say more power to them. It's something the whole industry needs to be doing." ■ *Patrick Daniel O'Neill*

'Marvel Island' to Open in 1999

DC Comics has its **Batman** ride and Superman roller coaster, but **Marvel Comics** will soon have a theme park island all its own.

Ground has been broken on **Universal Studios'** "Islands of Adventure" theme park in Orlando, Fla. The park is slated to open in 1999, with an entire Marvel island as part of its attractions, which will also include a Jurassic Park island and an Atlantis-themed island.

The Marvel island will contain two restaurants, a live X-Men show, what Marvel Vice-President of Corporate Development Mike Dresner terms "the world's biggest comic book store" and three incredible rides. The rides include:

• **Spider-Man 3-D Simulator**—The Spidey 3-D simulator takes riders through a two-acre sound stage filled with the best that current 3-D imaging technology and holography has to offer. A total of 13 separate scenes are used as you and Spidey chase after Doctor Octopus.

• **Giant Hulk Roller Coaster**—Riders are shot out of a cannon 150 feet up a track at 45 miles per hour. The coaster goes through six complete inversions, and at night, the Hulk-coaster will be lit by green strobe light effects.

• **Dr. Doom's Fearfall**—Dresner says that patrons of this ride "stumble upon Dr. Doom's laboratory, where Doom takes unwilling victims and sucks the fear out of them for his own nefarious purposes." Victims are then shot 200 feet into the air (the park's highest point), before crashing back to Earth.

"The presentation Universal showed us was incredible," said Marvel Publisher Shirrel Rhoades, who was on hand for the ground-breaking. "I can't wait to go on the rides. I tell you, 1999 can't come fast enough." ■ *Jim McLauchlin*

'Wizard' Takes Over Chicago Comicon

The fireworks in Chicagoland this year will be at the Rosemont Convention Center as new owner Wizard Press (Yes, kiddies, that's us!) presents the Chicago Comicon. So what's shakin' at the show this year?

Well, for starters, guests up the ying-yang. Fans will be able to visit with and get autographs from a bevy of comic creators. Our Guest of Honor is **Frank Miller**, who will be joined by tons of other creators like **Jim Lee**, Alex Ross, Mark Waid, Peter David, Joe Quesada, Kurt Busiek, Marc Silvestri, James Robinson, Rob Liefeld, Terry Moore and Geof Darrow, among others. Entire crews from Chaos! Comics, Crusade Entertainment, DC Comics, Event Comics, Extreme Studios and Top Cow Productions will also be in attendance.

Sci-fi and fantasy fans can drop by the Wizards of the Coast booth and look forward to meeting Pat Tallman ("Lyta Alexander" from "Babylon 5"), John DeLancie ("Q" from **"Star Trek: The Next Generation"**) and the "**Star Wars**: Men Behind the Mask" tour featuring David Prowse, Peter Mayhew, Jeremy Bulloch and Kenny Baker.

Programming highlights include the Fleer OverPower $5,000 National Championships and the wild-and-woolly **Wizard Fan Awards**.

Long one of the industry's premier events, the Comicon hits its 22nd year and first under *Wizard*'s ownership in 1997. Dates on this year's Con are July 4-6. Admission runs $15 for one day, or $35 for a three-day pass. To order tickets or for further information, call 1-800-690-1669 or write: Wizard Presents Chicago Comicon 1997, P.O. Box 656, Yorktown Heights, NY 10598. ■ *Jim McLauchlin*

'Snowman' Shuffles to Avatar Press

Creator Matt Martin's acclaimed *Snowman*, previously published by Entity Comics, is moving to Avatar Press this fall.

"My contract with Entity Comics is up after *Snowman: 1944 #4*," said Martin. "And I simply got a better offer from Avatar Press."

The first Avatar *Snowman* mini-series will be *Snowman #0* in August and will showcase a revamped look for the Snowman character. "It's a twist on the look of Snowman," said Martin. "I'm not saying that this will be a big deal on the order of Superman's new costume, but it will be pretty damn cool."

Snowman fans will be interested to know that the new mini-series features Jack and Gwynn, the main characters from the original three-issue *Snowman* series.

Martin leaves Entity on good terms and is even working with Entity to create a new comic universe entitled "Southpaw." ■ *Matthew Senreich (with additional reporting by Buddy Scalera)*

Snowman gets a new look in August

byte this

WHAT'S UP ON WIZARD WORLD

You asked for it and you got it! Both **Event Comics** and **Crusade Entertainment** have joined Wizard World exclusively. If you're on AOL, the ONLY place to find **Jimmy Palmiotti, Billy Tucci, Painkiller Jane** and **Shi** is on Wizard World. Check out their new custom forums and the other Wizard World exclusives including Harris Comics, Hellshock and Lightning Comics at **Keyword: WIZARD**.

Get the latest on the Chicago Comicon online. Go to the WizExclusives area on Wizard World for constantly updated convention info. Plus, look for bulletins on our official online meeting at the convention. Send e-mail to **WizardTGTC@aol.com** if you want to hang with us.

Special thanks go out to Jae Lee, Tom Sniegoski, Comic Book Champions, Event Comics, Harris Comics and Lightning Comics for providing us the great prizes for the Asteroid X Scavenger Hunt. And a special WizWorld nod-of-extreme-appreciation goes to AX leaders NeshX and DkPhnx for their hard work in organizing the hunt.

On America Online, Keyword: Wizard.

CHAT HIGHLIGHTS FOR THE SPECIAL EVENTS ROOM

JUNE 12 (Thursday)
- **MYSTERY GUEST CHAT** (Guess who it is!)

Time: 8-9 p.m. (EST)

JUNE 14 (Saturday)
- **INDY COMICS CHAT**

Time: 9-10 p.m. (EST)

JUNE 23 (Monday)
- **BREAKING IN WITH DAVID CAMPITI**

Time: 8-9 p.m. (EST)

Check online for full chat schedules including club-hosted chats

Photos by Jose Villarrubia

HOT STUFF! Remember the Amanda Connor/22 Brides pictures Jimmy Palmiotti posted on Wizard World in the Event download area? Well, Jae Lee gave us EXCLUSIVE pictures of Audrey Causcilla, the model for Christina in *Hellshock* (shown above). These pictures are every bit as cool as the Amanda pictures. And you can only get 'em on Wizard World on AOL!

■ *Buddy Scalera* (**WizardTGTC@aol.com**)

Seven Mary Three
the new album
RockCrown
featuring
"Make Up Your Mind,"
"Lucky"
and "RockCrown"
Produced by Tom Morris, Jason Pollock & Jason Ross
Management: Darrel Massaroni, Darby Management
www.atlanticrecords.com Hear RockCrown: www.7M3.com
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A Marriage Made in Bat-Heaven

Above: The happy couple in their wedding suits

Right: Jim Balent's wedding present, an original Catwoman sketch

What would you rather have: a fancy tuxedo-type wedding and no money to show for it, or a **Batman** wedding and $10,000 cash? For Travis Fessler and Susan Rothfuss, it was an easy choice.

"My dad told me if I eloped, he'd give me money that he would have otherwise spent on a wedding so that I could make a down payment on a house," said Rothfuss. So being a huge **Catwoman** fan, she asked her fiancée Travis if he'd like to go to Las Vegas for a Batman-themed wedding. He readily accepted, and the couple became Mr. and Mrs. Fessler on March 19, 1997, being joined in holy matrimony by a "Blue Hawaii" Elvis at the Las Vegas Wedding Chapel. The entire wedding party wore Batman-related costumes, and *Catwoman* artist Jim Balent even sent an original sketch as a wedding present.

The couple is enjoying its new home in Florence, KY. At least for the moment. Marital strife may be on the horizon. "The whole Bat-wedding was her idea," said Travis. "I'm actually more of a Superman person myself." ■ *Jim McLauchlin*

JLA/Avengers Go on Tour

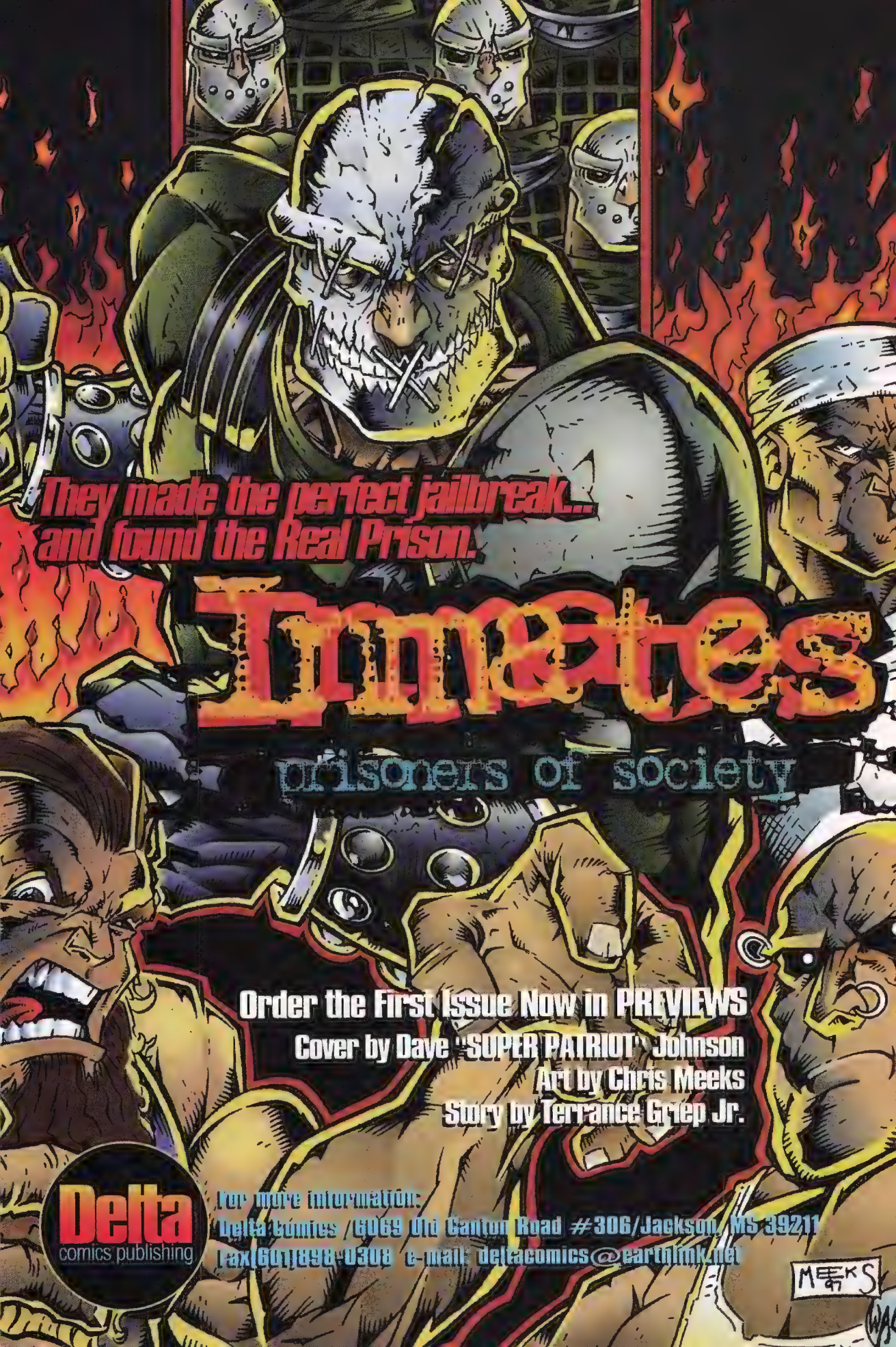
Amazing comic art only seen by a lucky few will soon be available to everyone, courtesy of its owner: Rob Liefeld.

Back in 1995, Liefeld purchased all 22 original **George Pérez**-penciled pages from the legendary ill-fated **JLA/Avengers** crossover. Despite the fact that the project never saw print due to a breakdown in the inter-company approval process, Pérez had started work on the project.

Now Liefeld is bringing this never-published artwork to the masses by displaying it at major comic conventions in 1997. "It occurred to me that it's unfair to have this beautiful work just sitting in my closet," said Liefeld. "If fans want to see it, they should be able to, and now they will."

The JLA/Avengers art will be displayed in groups of five pages at a time at the Chicago Comicon (July 4-6) and the San Diego Comic Con (July 15-20). Over the course of each day, all 22 pages will be rotated and displayed. ■ *Jim McLauchlin*

Wanna see the whole thing? Gotta get to Chicago or San Diego to see it!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and found the Real Prison.
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Art by Chris Meeks
Story by Terrance Griep Jr.
Delta
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Delta Comics / 6069 Old Canton Road #306/Jackson, MS 39211
Fax (601) 898-0308 e-mail: deltacomics@earthlink.net
MEEKS

company updates

ACCLAIM COMICS
Congratulations go out to **Fabian Nicieza**, who has just been promoted to president and publisher of Acclaim Comics.

ARCHIE COMICS
Beginning in August, Archie's 48-page **Sonic** Specials will no longer be separate one-shots, but instead part of one ongoing *Sonic Super Special* series (with the first issue being subtitled *Brave New World*).

AVATAR PRESS
Avatar will be publishing ***Nira X***, currently published by Entity Comics, as of the fall of this year.

CALIBER PRESS
In July, ***Kabuki: Skin Deep*** #4 hits the same time as the *Kabuki: Skin Deep* set, which combines issues #1-#3 into a conveniently bagged package.

CARTOON BOOKS
On June 13, **Jeff Smith**, Charles Vess (*The Book of Ballads and Sagas*) and Linda Medley (*Castle Waiting*) embark on the "Trilogy Tour." The trio travels across the U.S., stopping in comic stores, and conventions in Atlanta, Chicago and San Diego.

CHAOS! COMICS
Chaos! has entered into a partnership with heavy metal maestros **Megadeth** to produce a licensed comic. Look for *Cryptic Writings of Megadeth*, an ongoing quarterly debuting in August.

COMIC BOOK LEGAL DEFENSE FUND
The CBLDF has joined the ACLU in petitioning the U.S. Supreme Court to have artist **Mike Diana**'s obscenity conviction overturned. The Fund voted to allocate the funds necessary to prepare the petition, which could amount to $5,000. Although the U.S. Supreme Court usually accepts less than three percent of the cases submitted to it, this was the Fund's only remaining option.

Shi: Heaven and Earth #1

CRUSADE ENTERTAINMENT
In July, look for *Shi: Heaven and Earth* #1, which is the first #1 issue written and drawn by **Billy Tucci** since *Shi* #1. It features two merged stories, and ships with two cover editions—one color and one black and white—for $2.95 each.

DARK HORSE COMICS
Look for another **Boba Fett** one-shot this August. *Boba Fett: Murder Most Foul* features a guy trying to stiff the Fett on a contract. Bad idea....This August, *X-Wing Rogue Squadron—In the Empire's Service* starts a new four-issue story arc which introduces Baron Fel to the *Rogue Squadron* comics.

DC COMICS
July is "JLA Month," as three related projects are planned. There's a *JLA Gallery* pin-up book, the long-awaited ***JLA/WildC.A.T.s*** crossover and *DCU Secret Files* #1, an oversized *Secret Origins*-style ongoing series which features the origin of the new JLA.... August will see the ***Kingdom Come*** trade paperback.... A ***Destiny*** three-issue series, starring the Sandman character is destined to start in September. It's written by Alisa Kwitney with art by four different painters.... The Legionnaire called Inferno will spin off into her own mini-series in August, written and penciled by former *Legion of Super-Heroes* artist **Stuart Immonen**.

EVENT COMICS
This winter brings **Ash**'s third anniversary and a new, ongoing *monthly* Ash series, with **James Robinson** taking the writing reins, and **Joe Quesada** and **Jimmy Palmiotti**, the hero's co-creators, handling the art....Painkiller Jane jumps from her Darkness crossover into her own series in June....The assassin Smoke brutally takes out a number of Ash's friends in July's *Ash: Cinder and Smoke* #3, which is by Mark Waid, Brian Augustyn and Humberto Ramos, and features two cover editions: one by Quesada and Palmiotti, and the other by Ramos and Palmiotti.

EXHIBIT A PRESS
Stephen Bissette supplies a wraparound cover for *Wolff & Byrd, Counselors of the Macabre* #16, set for July, which will complete the saga of the swamp-like creature Sodd. In addition, this issue will contain other artistic contributions from Jeff Smith, **Bernie Wrightson**, Rick Veitch, Charles Vess and more!

HALL OF HEROES
Riding on some well-deserved hype, ***Sleepwalking*** #2 is scheduled to ship in June

HARRIS COMICS
Harris' Cyberfrog teams up with—and battles—Lightning Comics' Creed in July's ***Cyberfrog vs. Creed*** #1, a special 32-page one-shot by creators Ethan Van Sciver and Trent Kaniuga.

IMAGE COMICS
• HOMAGE COMICS
At this year's Chicago Comicon (July 4-6), ***Strangers in Paradise*** creator Terry Moore and his wife will be the guests at a dinner put together by his online fans. Check out the letters page of the latest *SiP* for more info.

• TOP COW COMICS
The Darkness #7, shipping the week of July 28, features the beginning of a four-issue writing stint by the *Witchblade* team of David Wohl and Christina Z. **Garth Ennis** returns as regular writer with issue #11.

• WILDSTORM PRODUCTIONS
Beginning in July, WildStorm's "New Horizon" publishing and promotional program will restructure all WildStorm titles. ***Grifter*** is canceled, as is *Backlash*. The Backlash character gets new life as part of Brett Booth's new title, *WildCORE*. As a part of "New Horizon," there will be a 16-page preview (eight pages of story, eight pages of sketchbook material) of **Jim Lee**'s new title bagged with *WildC.A.T.s* #40....July's ***StormWatch*** #50 is the title's last issue until the series is relaunched in October with a new #1 and a new artist.

KITCHEN SINK PRESS
Neil Gaiman contributes a script for the story "The Return of Mink Stole" and Michael Allred writes "The Weapon" for *The Spirit: The New Adventures* #2.

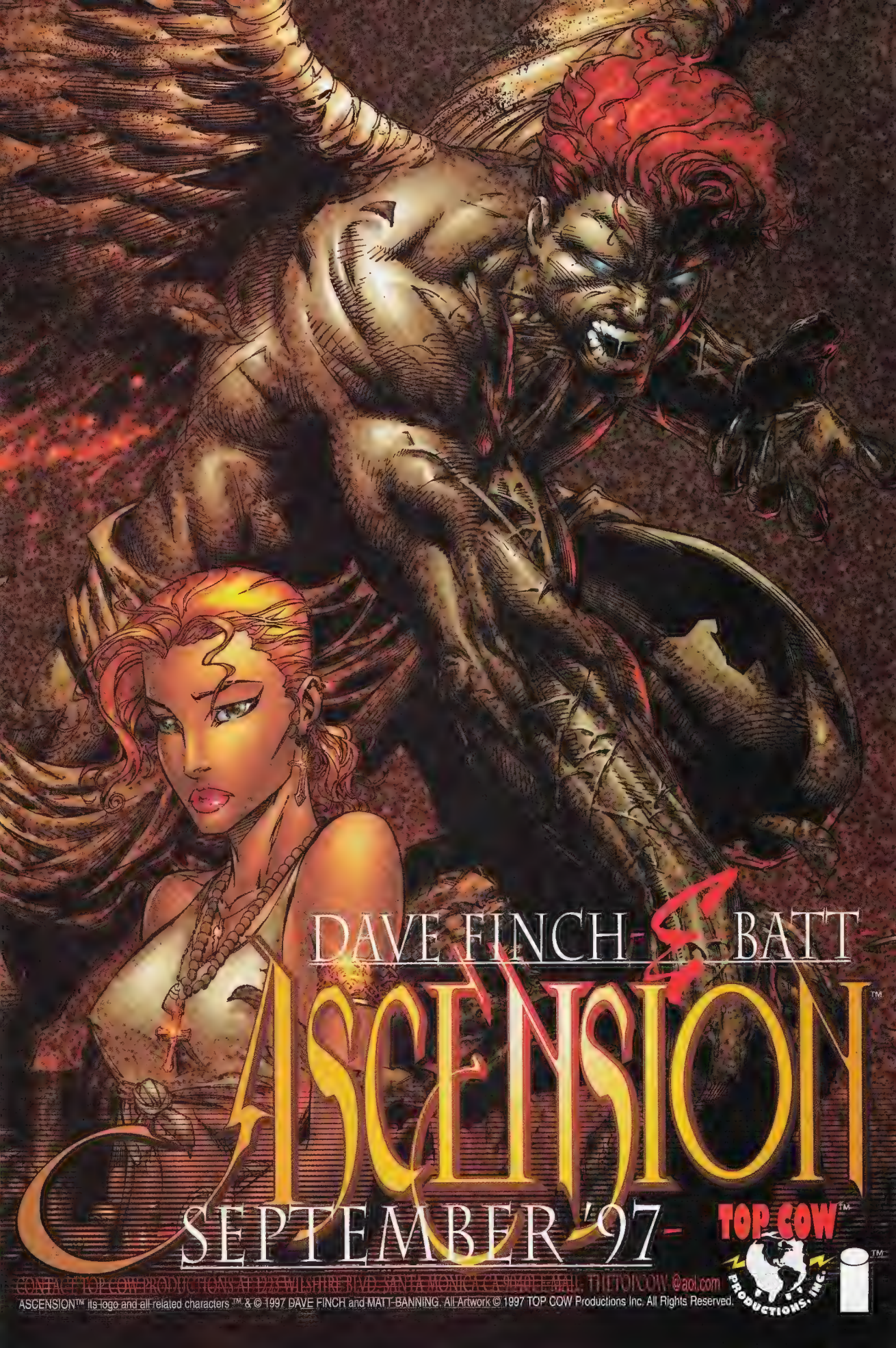
LIGHTNING COMICS
Following June's *Creed: The Good Ship and the New Journey Home* #1, Lightning will no longer publish the fantasy title. Its creator, **Trent Kaniuga**, plans to put the series on hiatus for a year to work on other projects, like his upcoming sci-fi series, *The Fuzz*.... June's *Faith* #1 debuts Lightning's angelically powered heroine, who finds herself in the middle of an angel/demon war.

LONDON NIGHT STUDIOS
Ultimate Strike #7 debuts London Night's new characters **Lock N' Load**, and concludes "Stryke: Year One." Also, *VR Vixen* #0 introduces LNS' computer-based heroine. Both $3 Mature Readers books ship in July.

MARVEL COMICS
Starting in June, all $1.99 Marvel titles will feature gatefold covers every month. The inside of each gatefold will contain introductory information....The Hulk pays a visit to the **X-Men** in *Incredible Hulk* #455....*Daydreamers*, a three-issue mini-series beginning in June, features a lead-in to September's ***Heroes Return*** mini-series....With its writer and penciler moving elsewhere, *Untold Tales of Spider-Man* will be retired after issue #25 in August.

PENTHOUSE COMIX
Manga master **Masamune Shirow** (*Ghost in the Shell*) contributes "Exon Depot" to May's *Penthouse Comix* #24.

SIRIUS ENTERTAINMENT
Dawn #6, the conclusion to the "Lucifer's Halo" epic, hits in June. Story, art, covers, colors, letters and assorted weird text pieces are by Joseph Michael Linsner....Drew Hayes' ***Poison Elves*** hits #25 in July and celebrates with extra story pages. W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Blood Lust *returns Vampirella to her home planet of Drakulon*

James Robinson and Joe Jusko give VAMPIRELLA a transfusion in the fully painted 'Blood Lust'

Blood Brothers

She's been to Hell and back, and has never looked better.

That's because Vampirella, Harris Comics' original Bad Girl who died at the hands of Mistress Nyx in 1996's *Vampirella: Death and Destruction #3*, will be starring in the fully painted, two-issue prestige mini-series *Vampirella: Blood Lust*, starting this July.

This "missing chapter" in Vampi's life tells exactly where the sexy anti-heroine went between her death and subsequent rebirth in the follow-up mini-series *Vampirella Lives*. Now, breathing life into Vampirella is writer James Robinson (*Starman*, *Leave it to Chance*), whose innovative take on the books he writes has won him fame. What really makes this project stand out, though, is its unique artistic formula: *Blood Lust* is the first sequential comics work by renowned poster, trading card and cover artist Joe Jusko. Ever.

"I've always been a really, *really* big fan of Vampirella from the time I discovered the character back around 1972," Jusko says. "I had approached Harris some time ago about possibly doing a painted story for them. When James came on board, we came up with a really great story about Drakulon. Since the whole idea of Vampirella's homeworld intrigued me, I thought we could clear it up once and for all and help solidify Vampirella's background. It just seemed like the right project at the right time."

Bridging the gap between *Death and Destruction* and *Vampirella Lives*, *Blood Lust* takes Vampi back to her roots.

"Basically, it's about Vampirella awakening in Drakulon," Robinson says. "She discovers that the river Styx has dried up and the ensuing drought has killed Drakulon. Instead of the paradise she remembers from her youth, Drakulon is now a decimated land where savage roaming nomads attack anyone they can find for blood."

From there, Vampi meets up with Adam Van Helsing—who was killed in *Vengeance of Vampirella #25*—and the two attempt to bring Drakulon back to life by renewing the river Styx. However, there are some serious forces at work who want to make sure the Styx never flows again, and one of them just happens to be a close relative of Vampi's—namely, her mother Lilith, who's plugged up the river for her own purposes.

What brought Robinson to the project, besides the chance to help define Vampirella's rocky history, was his fondness for the character. "It was a combination of

BY MATTHEW BRADY

things," Robinson says. "First, it was another opportunity to follow in the footsteps of [early *Vampirella* writer] Archie Goodwin, who I consider as my mentor in comics in many ways. Secondly, I had done the short story in the *Vampirella 25th Anniversary Special*, so I was open to doing something else. The offer came along, and the chance to work with Joe on his first sequential artwork was a challenge that was too good to pass up."

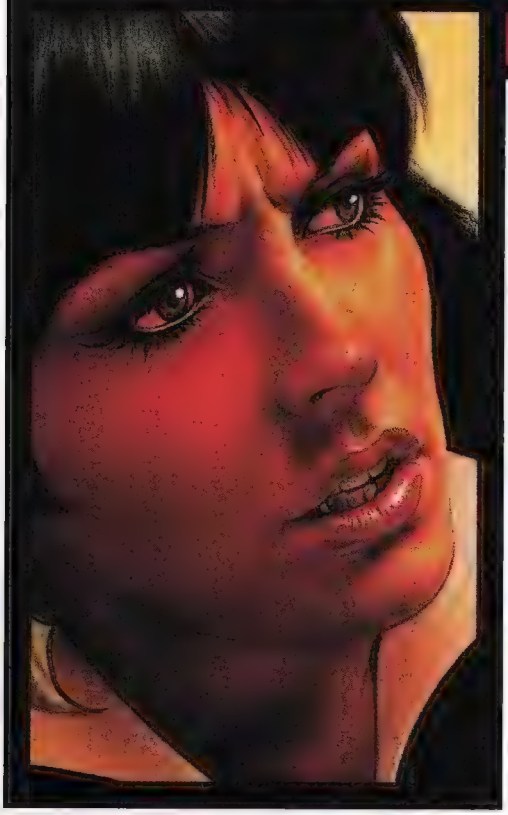
Apparently, Robinson was up to the challenge as Jusko didn't encounter anything in the script he couldn't handle. "We seemed to gel perfectly," Jusko says. "That's the thing that amazed me, and it's one of the reasons why I can't wait to work with [Robinson] again. He knew my strengths and what I wanted to do, and I was able to interpret what he wanted in the script.

"James' script was just everything you could ask for as an illustrator. He gave me tons of great stuff as far as scenery, characters, details and color suggestions. I think it worked out really well. I didn't get bogged down at all."

It's hard to believe that in today's market where every publisher has a painted, prestige project coming out every other week, Jusko, who rose to major prominence with 1992's *Marvel Masterpieces* card set, hadn't put anything out before this. "I had talked about doing something over at Marvel," Jusko says, "and was offered a couple of different things, but sequential work for me would have been so different from what I was used to mentally, as far as doing the sequential work and keeping the interest in painting the same character over and over again. I never really found anything that I thought would do that for me.

"My interests lie toward the more realistic subject matter, such as the Edgar Rice Burroughs and the Conan stuff, and Vampirella kind of falls into that vein," he continues. "She's not really a superhero. I would probably lose my mind by page 10 if I had to paint the same guy in the same blue tights over and over again. It's just a question of: Can I stay interested in the story and the character for the time it will take to paint the books?"

And unlike most artists, whose toughest painting stage is sitting down and staring at a blank page, Jusko just shrugs it off. "Actually, that's what I'm having the most fun with," he admits. "That's the fun, creative part of it, telling the story. James really doesn't like working in the strict, page-layout Marvel method, and I wouldn't want to work that way since this is the first time I'm doing sequential work. We talked it over, and agreed that it would be best that when James plotted the story out, he would break it down to the number of panels per page, but leave the composition of the panels up to me. This left a lot of room for interpretation on my part.



Robinson and Jusko have been chomping at the bit to write and draw Vampirella

An enormous amount of time was spent putting *Vampirella: Blood Lust* together. The project was formulated early in 1996, and went through a number of revisions and hammerings-out before it was ready to be painted. Jusko, who began work on the project last July, spends 12 to 16 hours a day with acrylic paints, getting through about two pages a week.

The time and meticulous attention to detail is extremely important, says Jusko. "One of the things that really bothers me about certain other projects being painted by some of my favorite artists," he says, "is that when I pick up the book, I can see they used some sort of altered technique rather than their usual style to get the book done in an expeditious manner.

"I don't want to cheat the fans who know what my stuff normally looks like, so I'm treating every page the same way I treat the covers. It's basically 48 pages of cover paintings, so it's definitely taking a long time."

"He gave me just enough to keep me from getting confused, but more than enough room to actually do what I wanted on my own. It really was a great working relationship."

So great, in fact, that another team-up between Jusko and Robinson may be in the future.

"I very much enjoy working with Joe and Harris Comics," Robinson says, "so if an idea did come up, I would certainly love to work with them again."

"I'm talking with Harris already about doing another Vampi book after this," Jusko says. "I really, *really* enjoy the character, and I'm having so much fun on this. I have another idea for a story I'd like to do, and if I can talk James into writing it, I think we'll probably do another story arc or mini-series.

"I plan to get back to Vampirella someday, because working on this now, I'm having more fun than I think I've had in years. And I want to keep having this much fun."

Matthew Brady has a hard time believing that Styx has dried up. C'mon, songs like "Mr. Roboto" and "Come Sail Away" just never die.

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HOT FOR PREACHER

Has Vertigo's 'Preacher' replaced 'Sandman' as its flagship title?

By Scott Brick

Both deal with the supernatural. Both have superstar talent behind them. Both are popular Vertigo titles. But if you ask any of the parties involved, the comparison between *Preacher* and *Sandman* ends right there.

"Comparing *Sandman* to *Preacher* is like comparing 'The English Patient' with 'The Toxic Avenger,'" says Vertigo Editor Axel Alonso. "The only thing *Preacher* and *Sandman* have in common is that they both are mature comics with a dark fantasy aspect that explore the potential of the comic book form. The stories they tell, and the sensibilities that shape those stories, are completely different."

Even *Sandman* creator/writer Neil Gaiman agrees. "It seems a bit like comparing apples and fish," he says, "but the ecological niche of 'Vertigo's best selling title' which was *Sandman*'s when it was being published, is now *Preacher*'s, so I suppose some comparison on that basis is inevitable."

But while the editor and creators point to the differences, comparisons between the two titles are inevitable because of their many similarities. *Preacher* is, after all, Vertigo's top-selling book, the title *Sandman* held during its seven-year run. Both books boast superstar writers in Gaiman and *Preacher*'s Garth Ennis. Both feature top-flight artistic talent—Steve Dillon on *Preacher* and Kelley Jones, Charles Vess and others on *Sandman*, not to mention cover artists Glenn Fabry (*Preacher*) and Dave McKean (*Sandman*).

With so much in common, it was only fitting that the torch of Vertigo's flagship title has been ceremoniously passed from the now-defunct *Sandman* to the white-hot *Preacher*.

From 1990 through 1996, Gaiman's *Sandman* stood alone atop the alternative comics heap. Its epic 75-issue run, which ended at Gaiman's behest, told the story of Morpheus, King of the realm called The Dreaming. The Dreaming is a place every human willingly enters in his or her sleep, and whose borders hold terrors equal to its delights. Indifferent and aloof as only an immortal can be, Morpheus ultimately learns compassion, sacrificing his throne (and life) to ease the suffering in his realm. Gaiman's *Sandman* tales were literate, lyrical and mesmerizing, devotional ballads sung to the beauty and danger of dreams.

Preacher, on the other hand...

Shockingly violent and brutally suspenseful, Ennis and Dillon's *Preacher* stormed into the void created by *Sandman*'s passing in 1996, seizing fandom by its collective throat. Fans who assumed Vertigo's new bestseller would continue *Sandman*'s tradition of enlightened, reverential stories were in for a surprise the first time they

saw a head explode or a woman's hand get knifed to a dashboard. Graphic, blasphemous and irrepressibly funny, *Preacher* is filled with a neglectful God, cursing Christians and even an inbred descendant of Jesus Christ thrown in for good measure. Armed with the Word of God (forcing all who understand him to do his bidding), Reverend Jesse Custer is on a quest to find God, who's abandoned his post. Never has one man's search for his creator been more graphic.

Just how similar is *Preacher* to *Sandman* in content? Both are adult-oriented, finite stories told within a span of approximately 75 issues. Both reveal the pros and cons of immortality, showing us mere mortals that demons lurk behind the veil of eternal life. In each series a deity has abandoned his realm—God in *Preacher* and Satan in *Sandman*. And while some may believe *Preacher*'s graphic violence forever separates it from *Sandman*, Gaiman was no stranger to the dark side of storytelling. His Serial Killer Convention from *Sandman* #14 was tame compared to Dr. Destiny's finger-eating, knitting-needles-in-eyesockets romp through issue #6.

Despite being practically devoid of spandex, both *Sandman* and *Preacher* dance along the periphery of the very superhero world they seek to avoid. Heroes from the Justice Society, Justice League, and Infinity Inc. made appearances early in *Sandman*'s run, perhaps in deference to continuity pressures from DC, or perhaps to remind us that even superheroes dream. Similarly, *Preacher* has elements of a prototypical superhero story. As Alonso points out, Jesse wears a costume (his collar), has trusty sidekicks (his girlfriend Tulip and Irish vampire buddy Cassidy), nasty villains (The Saint of Killers, The Grail, Herr Starr) and even superpowers (the Word of God). "These elements provide an anchor for comic readers who're used to leotard-and-tights heroes but who're ready for something different," he says.

Sandman garnered more acclaim than any book since 1986's *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*, with *Time* and *Rolling Stone* praising Gaiman's storytelling genius. Since *Preacher*'s debut, creators Ennis and Dillon have been similarly lauded. Says Alonso, "Positive reviews in *Spin* and *Entertainment Weekly* certainly didn't hurt."

But as Ennis, co-creator and writer of *Preacher*, reminds us, "The two books are obviously very, very different. Any sort of link or comparison between *Preacher* and *Sandman* is very tenuous at best, and only comes from [the fact that] *Preacher* is now Vertigo's best selling book and *Sandman* used to be."

A key difference between the two books is their influences. "Both books kind of tap into what was popular at the time," says Ennis. "*Sandman* tapped into a fantasy niche, a very strong Gothic fantasy kind of drama [like 'Beauty and the Beast' and 'Bram Stoker's Dracula']. *Preacher* taps into what's popular in movies right now, that twisted kind of Americana that's been popular since the late '80s, all these on-the-road, on-the-nastier-side-of-America films. *Sandman* is very strongly a fantasy book. *Preacher* is probably more movie-based."

Vertigo's Executive Editor Karen Berger emphasizes narrative styles as the true difference between the books.

"I think with *Preacher* and *Sandman*, you're really showing the two extremes of Vertigo's publishing sensibility. *Sandman* is very much a pure fantasy book; it deals with mythological and historical concepts. Atmospherically, it's 180 degrees away from *Preacher*, which is a book with a totally different, take-no-prisoners attitude."

In terms of popularity, *Preacher* is hot on *Sandman*'s heels, although comparing sales figures between the titles is difficult. "The comics industry is in a different state now than it was when *Sandman* was at its height of popularity," says Berger. "It's not fair to compare sales because everything did a hell of a lot better three years or four years ago."

Given *Preacher*'s phenomenal success, everyone remains committed to continuing its run. Both Ennis and Dillon, unlike Gaiman, own their series and have a stake in its performance. Says Dillon, who has survived a bout of pneumonia without missing an issue, "We're just going to keep on doing what we want to do. We have a specific tale to tell and we're glad that there are people who enjoy reading it."

So what does the future hold for *Preacher*? Will its recent successes lead to any changes? For Ennis, success just translates into security.

"It's nice that the book is doing as good as it is," says Ennis, "but for me, all that means is the book will survive long enough for me and Steve to tell the story that we want to tell. Ultimately, the important thing at the center of all this is to keep that story going."

Preacher's meteoric rise looks to continue as it blazes down the trail *Sandman* paved before it. And so, at least until issue #75, *Preacher*'s search for the immortal Creator will continue. "Unless there's an act of God..." says Berger, "I don't see why that would change." W

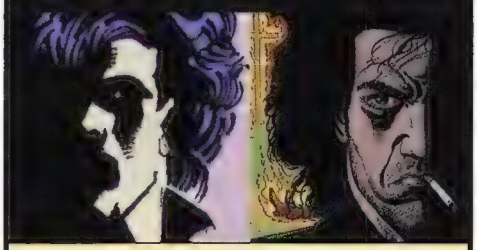
Scott Brick tried comparing apples to fish but couldn't. So he combined the two into an apple fish pie. Mmm...pie.

"Comparing SANDMAN to PREACHER is like comparing 'The English Patient' with 'The Toxic Avenger.'"

—Vertigo Editor Axel Alonso

Men in Black

***Sandman* and *Preacher* are Vertigo's two best-selling titles, and believe it or not, their title characters, Morpheus and Jesse Custer, have a lot in common. For those of you who are unaware of the similarities, *Wizard* presents this rundown.**



Morpheus	Jesse Custer
Looks dreamy in basic black.	Looks holy in basic black.
Has an immortal drinking buddy in Hob Gadling.	Has an immortal drinking buddy in Cassidy.
Went searching for Satan.	Is looking for God.
Some of his family wanted to kill him.	Some of his family wanted to kill him.
His idea of revenge is sentencing his ex-girlfriend to the bowels of Hell.	His idea of revenge is forcing someone to literally count every grain of sand on the beach.
Killed a family member.	Killed a family member.
When the family gets together, Death always shows up.	When the family gets together, death always shows up.
Dispenses justice with the wisdom of a god.	Dispenses justice with the Word of God. ■ SB

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Illustration: Tim Sale

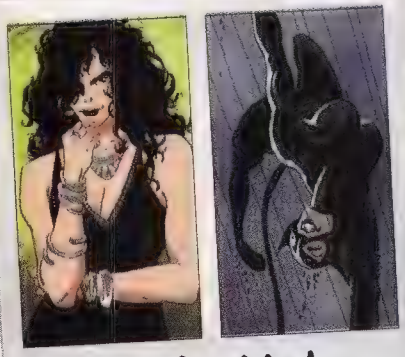
TH TAKES A HOLIDAY

'WIZARD' LINES UP 10 SUSPECTS WHO COULD BE THE SERIAL KILLER HOLIDAY FROM 'BATMAN: THE LONG HALLOWEEN'

"WHO IS HOLIDAY?" For all the armchair detectives following the 13-part *Batman: The Long Halloween* (and shame on you if you're not one of them), this is the big question. Set in the "Batman: Year One" era (with an inexperienced Batman), this cunningly crafted mystery puts Batman's (and the reader's) detective skills to the test. And almost everyone is a logical suspect.

Here's what we know: 1) Holiday is a serial killer who strikes on holidays; 2) Holiday always leaves the murder weapon (a traceless .22-caliber handgun) and little holiday trinkets (like a jack o' lantern or champagne glass, depending on the holiday) at the murder scene; and 3) Holiday seemingly has a vendetta against mob boss Carmine "The Roman" Falcone and his vast Gotham City crime organization; most of the victims have some tie to him.

We went down our list of suspects and narrowed it to 10, followed by commentary from *Long Halloween* writer Jeph Loeb and the junior detectives of the *Wizard* Bullpen. Let's line up the suspects...



CATWOMAN

SUSPECT: CATWOMAN

MOTIVE: The Roman's put a $1 million bounty on her head, something she's admittedly unhappy with. And she always manages to get mixed up in The Roman's business somehow, usually robbing him of something priceless.

LOEB: "The mysterious *femme fatale* who's certainly capable of murder and can handle a .22. She has clearly been at war with The Roman since day one."

ODDS: 25-1. Though it was theorized in *Long Halloween #7* the .22-caliber handgun is "lightweight, easy on the hand and perfect for a woman," Catwoman is not a murderer. Besides, if she *were* Holiday, we doubt Batman would act like he does around her in current issues of *Catwoman*.

THE JOKER

SUSPECT: THE JOKER

MOTIVE: This guy's a friggin' lunatic who'll kill anyone. Even though he's been "looking" for Holiday, he could easily be disturbed enough to be the killer.

LOEB: "I don't know if anyone knows about this, but each month, there's a top-10 serial killer list in Gotham City and the Joker just can't stand that Holiday might be on that list and he might not."

ODDS: 20-1. Sure, he's nuts...but he's also telling the truth when he says he won't stand for Holiday aping his gig. And stemming from what Loeb says, he would *never* use an alias because it might take notoriety away from his "artwork" as the Joker.

SUSPECT: CARMINE "THE ROMAN" FALCONE

MOTIVE: Taking out members of his own crime organization might sound far-fetched, but what if he was weeding out the weak links? His nephew Johnny Viti, the first victim, was about to testify against him and Mickey Sullivan and his "Irish" gang were careless and got caught after firebombing Harvey Dent's house. Even the rival gang led by Salvador Maroni got hit.

LOEB: "We only love what we destroy. Has The Roman destroyed the city he built? What Holiday is doing is dismantling The Roman's empire. We only love what we destroy."

ODDS: 15-1. All evidence says Holiday is a one-man operation and The Roman clearly has flunkies to do his dirty work. Plus, his own son Alberto was aced—and he loved his son so much he didn't want him involved in the dangers of his mob business. The Roman masquerading as Holiday makes little sense.

CARMINE FALCONE

SUSPECT: SOFIA FALCONE

MOTIVE: As The Roman's right-hand woman, she's her father's daughter—ruthless, smart and ambitious. She spent a lot of time rotting away in prison, most likely taking the fall for her father—a lot of resentment can fester from that sorta thing. As Holiday, she could easily whack her father's associates, followed by The Roman himself, and then be poised to take over Gotham City's underworld. Hey, nothing personal...it's only business.

SOFIA FALCONE

SAL MARONI

LOEB: "She went to prison and had a lot of time to think about her father and the world of organized crime. Has she gone around the bend?"

ODDS: 10-1. Not a bad theory, since she's a very hands-on type of killer. BUT she was in Gotham Penitentiary for the first five issues of *Long Halloween*, meaning she probably could not be the killer.

SUSPECT: SALVADOR "THE BOSS" MARONI

MOTIVE: It's well-known Maroni isn't too pleased he's the #2 dog in Gotham's underground. Since The Roman's men are usually the ones who are hit, it'd make sense his chief rival Maroni would be a likely culprit.

LOEB: "He has all the reason in the world. He hates The Roman and longs for the power of controlling Gotham City."

ODDS: 8-1. Maroni is as scared as everyone else of Holiday, especially now that some of his own men have become victims of the affair. Plus, like The Roman, Maroni lets his men do the dirty work.

SUSPECT: CALENDAR MAN

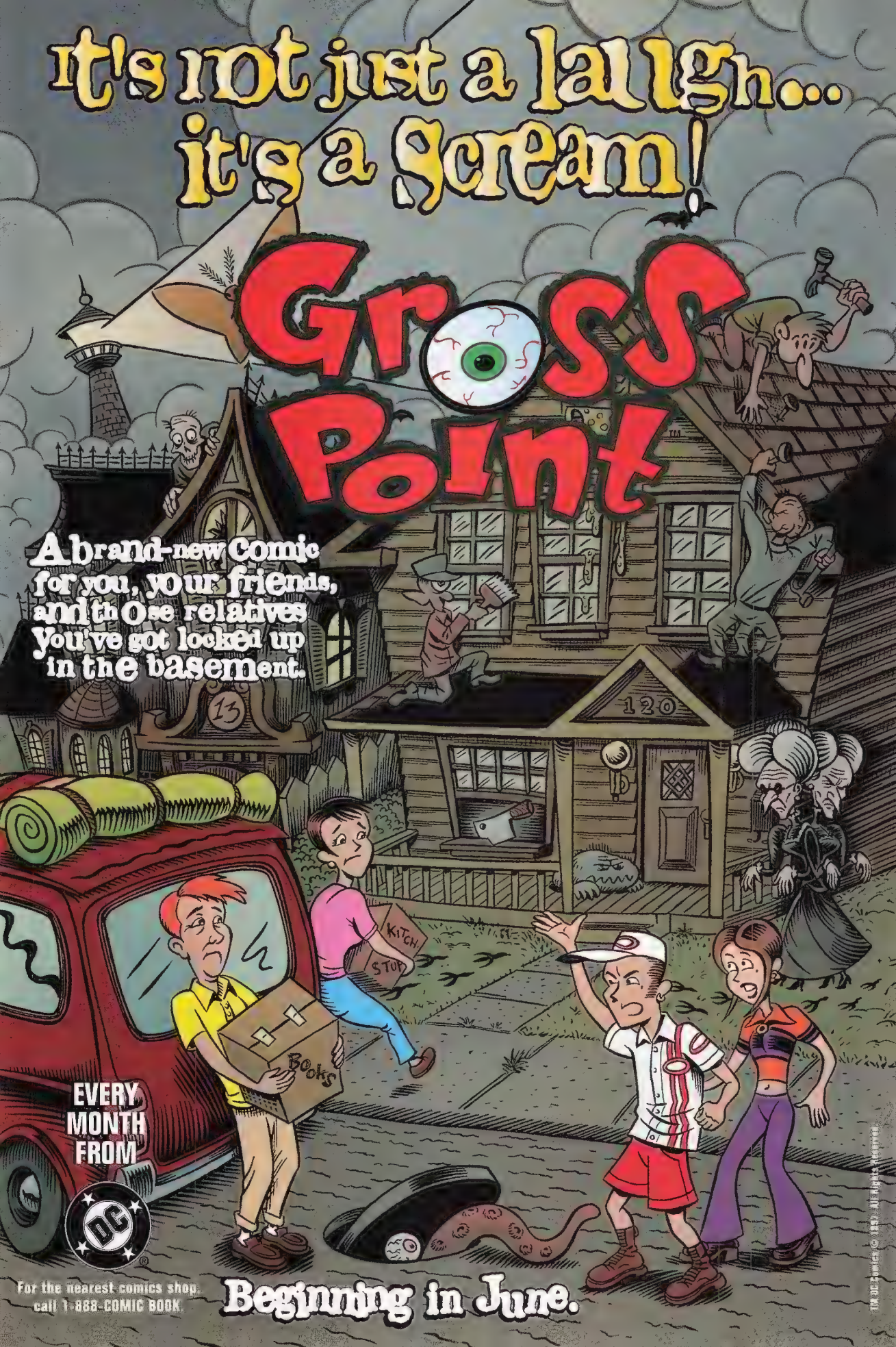
MOTIVE: As the Calendar Man, Julian Day commits crimes according to the calendar, the same as Holiday. He's also mentally unstable and could easily be the killer. It's not unlikely The Roman did something nasty at some point to a vengeful Day.

LOEB: "He fits the M.O. and records [at Arkham Asylum] have known to be altered."

ODDS: 6-1. Day is in good hands at Arkham Asylum and it's just too far-fetched (not to mention a little anti-climactic) to believe he breaks out every holiday to commit these murders. Plus, The Roman's connection to Day, while plausible, seems like it's something that would be common knowledge.

SUSPECT: HARVEY DENT

MOTIVE: Gotham City District Attorney Harvey Dent always sought justice, to a fault. He has often claimed an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appreciation for Batman for being able to cross a line he can't—or at least won't—in an official capacity. Dent wants The Roman taken down in the worst way, since he has been victimized many ways by the mob boss, both professionally and personally; Dent's been roughed up by The Roman's men, had his house blown up and his wife hospitalized as a result. But let's cut through the bull: He's a do-it-yourself type of guy who, shortly after *The Long Halloween* became the ruthless murderer Two-Face. Dent's a split personality and who's to say his homicidal side didn't take over to ace these mob goons?

LOEB: "There's two ways at looking at Harvey and I guess you have to figure out which one you want."

HARVEY DENT

ODDS: 5-1. Well, the *Long Halloween* fellas sure do *want* us to believe it's Dent. He's conveniently absent the same time Holiday is killing someone. He's conspicuously toiling in his basement workshop when Holiday is working in his basement. He says things that sound kinda suspicious like, "they do our jobs for us" (in reference to the mob wars killing members of The Roman and Maroni's "families") and was happy The Roman's men were all murdered, feeling they got what they deserved. But Dent ain't Holiday. Besides being waaaay too obvious, Harvey Dent is still in a law-upholding phase in his life and murder just ain't his way. Yet.

CALENDAR MAN

CARLA VITI

SUSPECT: CARLA VITI

MOTIVE: As The Roman's sister, Carla runs the show in Chicago and has her eyes set on Gotham. The only guy in her way: The Roman. By offing her brother and his associates, she primes herself for the top slot. And if you believe she wouldn't kill her own son Johnny (victim #1), think again. Johnny was ready to testify against her and The Roman; she could've bumped him off in order to save her own identity.

LOEB: "She certainly has the motive in wanting to destroy her brother's empire. Could she have killed her own son to cover her identity? She has always wanted her brother's empire."

ODDS: 4-1. It all clicks, moreso than with Dent. She's got motive, ambition, brains and a frame that would prefer a .22 handgun (which she happens to possess). What she doesn't have is the hands-on approach. Like The Roman and Maroni, she's also a crime lord who orders people to do the killing for her.

SUSPECT: MRS. RICHARD DANIEL

MOTIVE: The Roman had her husband killed right before her eyes. He died in her arms on the cruel streets of Gotham.

LOEB: "Out of respect for the Daniel family and the loss that they suffered, I cannot comment on the whereabouts or the activities of Mrs. Daniel at this time."

ODDS: 5-2. Aside from being the second most anti-climactic twist in comics history (next to Roderick Kingsley being the Hobgoblin), this would be pretty disappointing. You see her for two panels in the first issue, making her an unlikely suspect (Unless, of course, she shows up later in the series—which would make for a different ballgame).

MRS. RICHARD DANIEL

SUSPECT: ALBERTO FALCONE

MOTIVE: Revenge, pure and simple. Imagine this: A loving son whose father was always immersed in his "business," never spending any time with him...or any *holidays*. What better motive is there than a vengeful son trying to get back at a father who never paid attention to him?

LOEB: "The guy's dead. Nice try."

ODDS: 2-1. "The guy's dead," eh? Hah. Holiday *did* kill The Roman's son Alberto, not physically...but psychologically. Let's face facts: You never see his body (a sure sign he ain't dead) after he was reeling from "bullet wounds" and fell off that yacht. We say he faked his death, completing his full metamorphosis into Holiday. And there's more. Alberto is a smart Harvard grad, who has always wanted to be involved in his father's business and knows how the mob works with untraceable weapons, silencers and such. Plus, as it was surmised in *Long Halloween* #7, the .22-caliber handgun "is slight for a small hand"...maybe not a *woman's* hand, but that of a frail young man; Alberto certainly fits the bill. And, lastly, Alberto was born on a holiday (St. Valentine's Day)—a holiday/birthday that represents love... a holiday that his dad never came around for.

ALBERTO FALCONE

So cuff 'im and haul 'im into the clink. Alberto Falcone's our guy.

After writing this article, the Wizard *Staff would give 20, no, 25 bucks for the regular monthly Batman books to have such an intriguing supporting cast and chin-scratching mystery.*

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Wizard *casts the* Iron Man *movie!*

Casting call

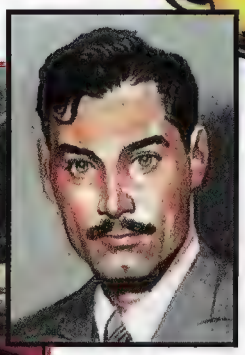
By a bunch of *Wizard* staffers

All photos by the Everett Collection, unless otherwise noted.

Today's audiences want a movie with a cool hero, hot babes, nasty villains and high-tech weaponry effects, you say? An Iron Man movie would give filmgoers all this stuff, and more. Easily.

With repulsor rays, plasma bolts and jet boots, audiences would drool at this stuff. (Hey, they liked "Eraser"...) Man, the ILM special effects team *alone* would have a field day with this flick.

Anyway, for our ultimate Iron-movie, we'd go for the classic feel: the red and gold armor with its trademark hip-guards, the solid supporting cast and nasty villains (Y'know, why would anyone wanna get rid of those cool hip-guards anyway? 'Member when Tony tried to siphon some power cosmic offa the Silver Surfer with 'em? Ah, but we digress....). So here are our picks.



Photographers International/Outline

IRON MAN

A dead ringer for Tony Stark, Timothy Dalton can play it cool as well as take the part of a ladies' man, as demonstrated in his James Bond flicks. Slap on a mustache and we've got ol' Shellhead.

JIM RHODES

As Stark Enterprises' pilot (and substitute Shellhead), Rhodey's even more built than Tony. Our pick? Carl Weathers ("Predator," "Street Justice").

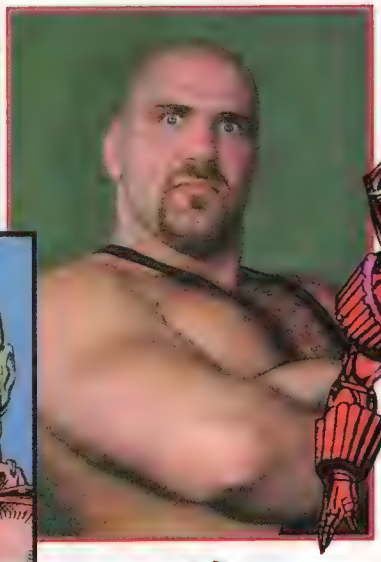
Gerardo Somoza/Outline

BETHANY CABE

Supermodel Angie Everhart'd be perfect as Tony's sassy and smart main squeeze. And she had similar traits in "Tales From the Crypt: Bordello of Blood."

CRIMSON DYNAMO

We need a beefy Russian guy to play Shellhead's nemesis. Pro wrestler Nikita Koloff does the trick.

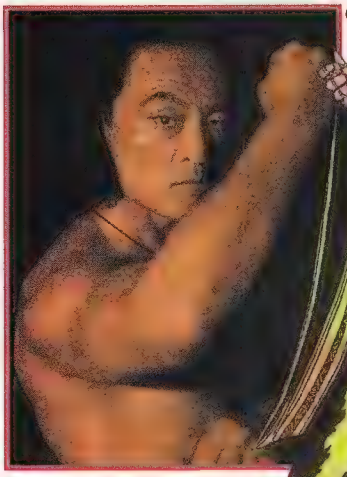


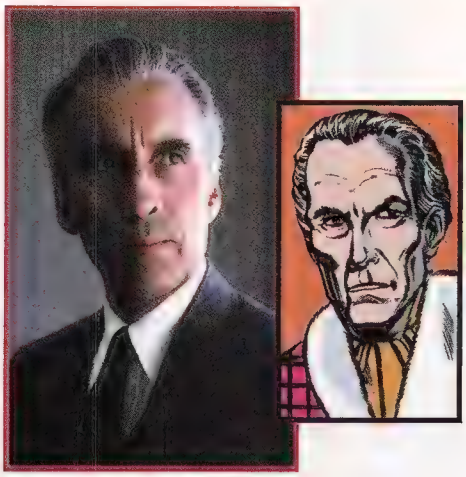
TITANIUM MAN

Andrew Bryniarski ("Street Fighter") looks just like our 10-foot tall, resident Russian armored psycho.

MANDARIN

No stranger to playing evil men, Cary Hiroyuki Tagawa ("Mortal Kombat") actually looks like the model for the Asian crime lord with the lethal finger rings.





JUSTIN HAMMER

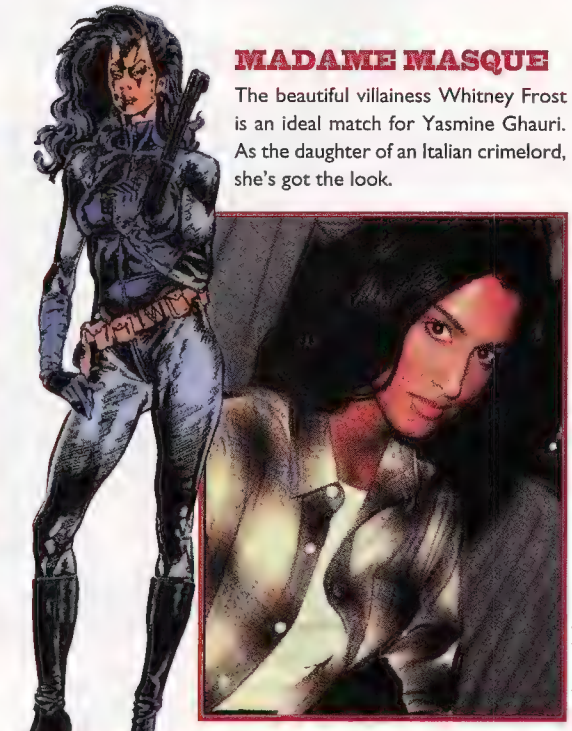
As Stark Enterprises' chief rival, Hammer's calculated, cutthroat tactics would fit Christopher Lee ("Gremlins II: The New Batch," "The Curse of Frankenstein") to a T.

LIVING LASER

Always a loser to Iron Man, the power-hungry Arthur Parks could be played by Tom Berenger, who's demonstrated similar qualities in "The Substitute."

MRS. ARBOGAST

Tyne Daly ("Cagney and Lacey") would be perfect as Tony's organized secretary. Plus, Daly's played characters who'd take no crap, like Arbogast.



MADAME MASQUE

The beautiful villainess Whitney Frost is an ideal match for Yasmine Ghauri. As the daughter of an Italian crimelord, she's got the look.

Gerardo Somoza/Outline

SCOTT LANG

Before he became Ant Man, Lang was just a single dad doing tech work for Tony Stark. Jere Burns does the dad part in "Something So Right"...he'll just have to work out the tech part.

OBADIAH STANE

A bald guy who's smart and relentless? Heck, Ed Harris did that in "The Firm." Only this time, he's Tony Stark's business rival. W

MAVERICK
WHEN YOU'RE DYING OF THE LEGACY VIRUS, EVERY OPERATION IS A SUICIDE MISSION!
MARVEL COMICS
Monthly from the House Of Ideas
www.marvel.com or AOL at keyword: marvel
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48 PAGES BEGINNING JULY 2
JORGE GONZALEZ • JIMMY CHEUNG
PEPOY 1997

WHEN I WAS A YOUNG WHIPPERSNAPPER, MAYBE JUST KNEE-HIGH TO STAN LEE, THERE WAS ONE PLACE I WANTED TO GO MORE THAN ANY OTHER IN THE WORLD: ***THE PLACE WHERE THEY MADE MARVEL COMICS,*** THE COMICS I GREW UP ON.

NOW THAT I'VE GROWN UP (AT LEAST PHYSICALLY), I CAN GO THERE. I'VE GOT A DRIVER'S LICENSE, A ROAD MAP AND AN ALMOST UNLIMITED PHOTOGRAPHY BUDGET.

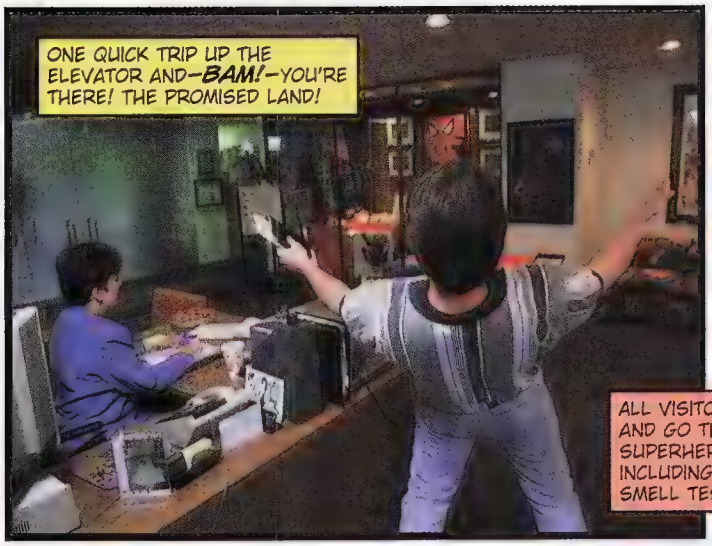
AND THAT MEANS I CAN BRING YOU TOO! I'M WILLING TO BET THAT AT LEAST A FEW OF YOU OUT THERE IN READER-LAND GREW UP ON MARVEL COMICS, TOO. I'M ALSO WILLING TO BET THAT YOU'D LOVE TO SEE THE EDITORS, MEET THE CREATORS AND EXPERIENCE THE WILD 'N' WOOLLY BULLPEN.

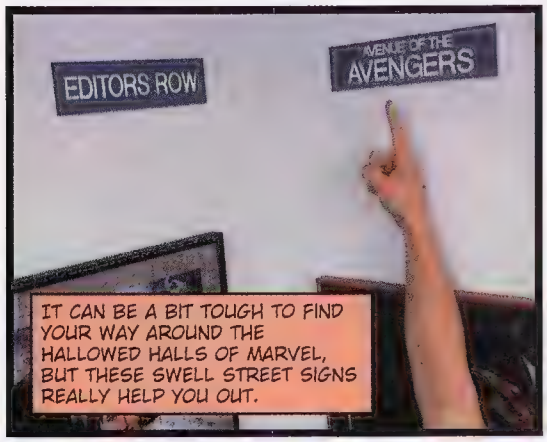
WELL, NOW'S YOUR CHANCE TO TAG ALONG. LOOK, BUT MAKE SURE NOT TO TOUCH. REMEMBER: YOU BREAK AN EDITOR, YOU BOUGHT 'IM. SO ENJOY THE RIDE AND MAYBE YOU CAN ACTUALLY FEEL A BIT OF THE MERRY MADNESS THAT LINGERS IN THE HOUSE OF IDEAS.

OPEN HOUSE

YOUR TOUR GUIDE:
"JUMPIN'"
JIM McLAUCHLIN
PHOTOS BY:
"SHUTTERIN'"
PAUL SCHIRALDI

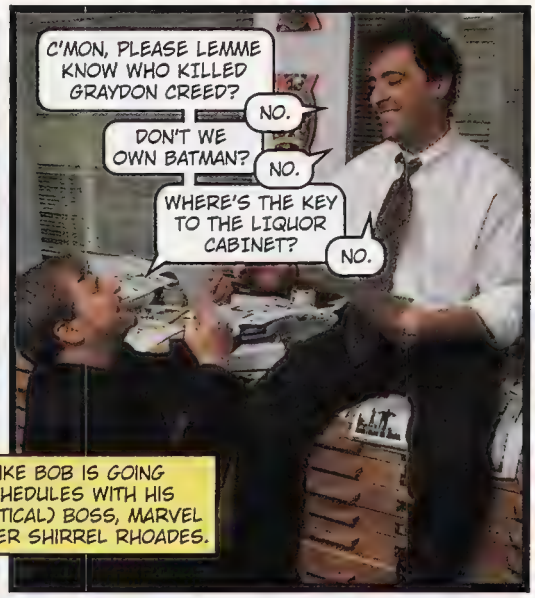
WIZARD TAKES A TOUR





OF MARVEL COMICS, THE HOUSE OF IDEAS!

IT'S MEETING DAY AT MARVEL! LET'S START WITH EDITOR-IN-CHIEF BOB HARRAS AND SEE WHAT HE'S UP TO.
I KNOW WHERE EVERYTHING ON THIS DESK IS. TRUST ME.

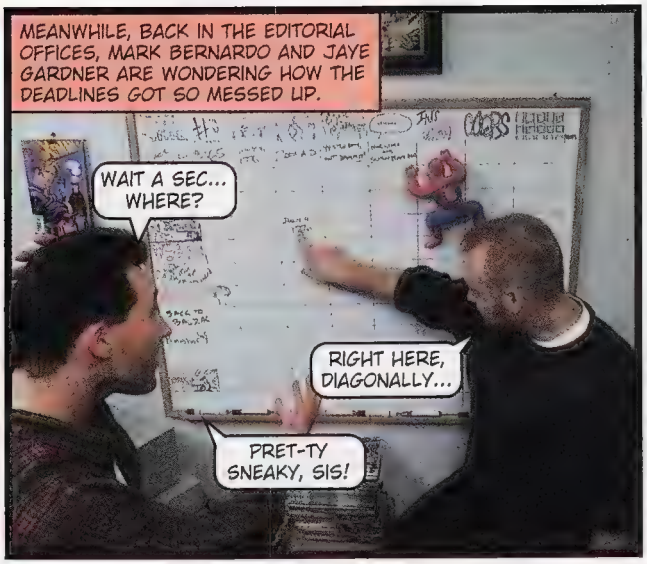

C'MON, PLEASE LEMME KNOW WHO KILLED GRAYDON CREED?
NO.
DON'T WE OWN BATMAN?
NO.
WHERE'S THE KEY TO THE LIQUOR CABINET?
NO.
LOOKS LIKE BOB IS GOING OVER SCHEDULES WITH HIS (THEORETICAL) BOSS, MARVEL PUBLISHER SHIRREL RHOADES.

MEANWHILE, IN THE UPSTAIRS SPIDER-WEBBED CONFERENCE ROOM, SPIDEY HIMSELF IS GOING OVER NEXT MONTH'S SPIDEY TITLES WITH SPIDER-EDITORS (FROM LEFT:) GLENN GREENBERG, MARK BERNARDO, TOM BREVOORT, AND THE CARDBOARD CUTOUT OF RALPH MACCHIO. (RALPH HAD TO RUN OUT TO GET PIZZA.)
NO, NO, NO! I NEVER SAY, "SPIDER-MAN SMASH PUNY HUMAN!" REWRITE IT.

SOMETIMES, MACCHIO IS CONSULTED FOR HIS SAGE ADVICE.
Y'KNOW, HE MAKES MORE SENSE THIS WAY.
HEY, CHECK IT OUT: THE TABLE'S SHINIER THAN CAP'S SHIELD!

AND WOLVERINE HAS TO GO OVER NEXT MONTH'S BOOKS WITH (FROM LEFT:) ASSISTANT EDITOR JASON LIEBIG, EDITOR MARK POWERS AND INTERN JASON DURNIN.
LOOK, I'M THE BEST THERE IS AT WHAT I DO, BUT I DON'T DO NUDE SHOTS. NOW COVER THAT UP!

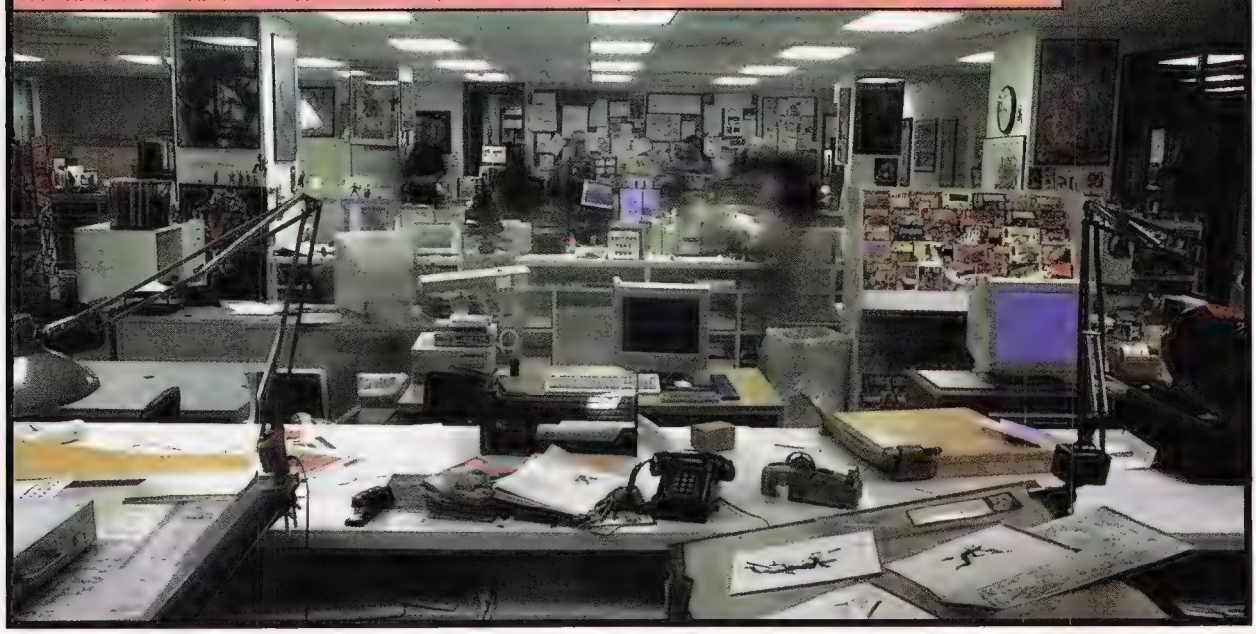
KA-ZAR ARTIST ANDY KUBERT IS WAITING FOR HIS MEETING AND SHOWING HOW HE GETS SUCH A...UNIQUE...PERSPECTIVE ON HIS ART.
GEEZ, WHO DRAWS THIS STUFF...?



EDITORS MATT IDELSON AND JOE ANDREANI (FRONT LEFT AND FRONT RIGHT) AND WRITERS BEN RAAB, JOE KELLY AND JAMES FELDER (BACK TO FRONT) HANG AROUND AND LOOK LIKE THEY'RE POSING FOR AN ALBUM COVER.

TIM TUOHY (LEFT), RESIDENT STAR TREK GUY, AND TOM MORGAN, ARTIST ON *STAR TREK UNLIMITED*, GET TOGETHER FOR A MIND MELD.

AND HERE IT IS! THE WORLD-FAMOUS ***MARVEL BULLPEN!*** YES, THE BULLPENNERS ALL VIBRATE LIKE THAT.



BULLPEN LIFE CAN BE QUITE HECTIC. SO WHEN THE STRESS GETS TO BE TOO MUCH, BULLPEN MAESTRO DAN CARR (LEFT) IS THERE TO OFFER JELLY BEANS OR A VARIETY OF OVER-THE-COUNTER DRUGS TO BULLPENNERS LIKE LYSA HAWKINS.

AND WHEN THE STRESS *REALLY* GETS TO BE TOO MUCH, THE WHOLE DURNED BUNCH BREAKS FOR A ROUND OR TWO OF *ROCK-EM SOCK-EM ROBOTS*. HEY! WE SAID NO WAGERING!

WOE BE TO ANYONE WHO LOSES A PAGE! *JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY* EDITORS BOBBIE CHASE (KNEELING) AND POLLY WATSON (STOMPING) SHOW BULLPEN GOPHER FAGAN (YES, ONE NAME. JUST LIKE CHER.) WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU SCREW UP AT MARVEL.

HECK, BOBBIE AND POLLY HAVE *INCREDIBLE HULK* PENCILER ADAM KUBERT SO SCARED, HE'S TAKEN TO WORKING AT THE OFFICE AND SLEEPING WHEN HE CAN (ON HIS LI'L HULKIE PILLOW, OF COURSE).

HEY! BETCHA DIDN'T KNOW THERE'S ACTUALLY A *SECOND* BULLPEN! MEL SANCHEZ (LEFT) AND JEANNE GEIER, WITH THE HELP OF THEIR WOLVERINE MANNEQUIN, PUT TOGETHER MARVEL'S ADS AND PROMO PIECES.

RALPH MACCHIO (CENTER) IS BACK, AND JUST IN TIME TO GET THE LOWDOWN ON SPIDER-MAN FROM THE PEOPLE WHO KNOW BEST: SPIDEY HIMSELF, AND ARTISTS JOHN ROMITA JR. (STANDING LEFT) AND JOHN ROMITA SR. (STANDING RIGHT).

IT'S A MEETING OF THE MINDS BACK IN THE X-OFFICE AS FORMER X-MEN SCRIBE CHRIS CLAREMONT (LEFT) AND CURRENT X-WRITER SCOTT LOBDELL GET TOGETHER (HMMM. WONDER WHY...?).
HEYYY, WHO GLUED MY HAND TO MY HEAD?
WELL, THAT'S ABOUT IT. IT'S BEEN A PRETTY FUN DAY. THINK I'LL TAKE MY LEAVE OF THIS PLACE...RIGHT AFTER I TAKE THIS ISSUE OF WOLVERINE! IT'S THE LAST ONE I NEED TO FILL IN MY RUN!
HEY! HE'S STEALIN' A COMIC!
'LEAST IT'S ONE O' MINE.
I'M SPOTTED! GOTTA MAKE A BREAK FOR THE ROOF!
LET'S GET HIM!
AAAARGH! CAUGHT! I THINK I'M DOOMED!
HEY, TRUE BELIEVER! WANNA SEE ME THROW HIM OFFA THE ROOF?
OR WOULDJA RATHER ME CARVE CHUBBO HERE INTO FAJITA MEAT?
SECONDS LATER...
SPLAT!
YEP. HE'S STREET PIZZA. WELL, THAT'S ALL FOLKS. THERE IS A REAL MARVEL TOUR AND YOU CAN SIGN UP FOR IT BY CALLING (212) 696-0808. BUT BE WARNED: THE WAITING LIST IS REALLY LONG, AND IF YOU STEAL ANYTHING, WE DISPENSE HARSH JUSTICE IN THE MERRY MARVEL MANNER! EXCELSIOR!
...MEDIC...
THE END

THE WIZARD Q&A:

BY ANDREW KARDON • PHOTOS BY RICH FRISHMAN

Poised to take over 'Iron Man' and 'Avengers,' hot writer Kurt Busiek proves that success doesn't always come overnight

"I was an overnight success after 12 years in the business," says Kurt Busiek in his usual jovial and slightly nasal voice. And he's not kidding.

The popular 37-year-old writer's name became hot on fans' lips with his 1993 collaboration with painter Alex Ross on Marvel Comics' acclaimed *Marvels* mini-series, and has since proven he's no one-hit wonder. He's continued his all-star status by working on his own *Astro City* for Image Comics, Marvel's sleeper hit *Thunderbolts* and the critically acclaimed *Untold Tales of Spider-Man*. And Marvel knows it has a winner in Busiek: he's currently a contract away from writing *The Avengers* and *Iron Man* when the books return from the "Heroes Reborn" universe later this year.

As for those other 12 years, the Boston-born Busiek worked his way around the industry. Growing up in New England, Busiek always had his sights set on being a comic book writer. While attending Syracuse University, he landed a seven-page back-up story in *Green Lantern* #162. "I made that sale on Thursday, and graduation was Saturday," says Busiek.

From there, it was more back-ups, a gig on *Power Man and Iron Fist* for Marvel, a *Red Tornado* mini-series for DC and an assistant editorship at *Marvel Age* magazine. After a brief stint as a literary agent, he continued freelancing until Marvel brought him on board as Direct Sales Manager overseeing the science fiction anthology *Open Space*. Though the series only lasted four issues, it was there that Busiek met then-unknown painter Ross. And since then, Busiek's career hasn't slowed down for an instant.

Now, with his *Iron Man* dream project in his sights, *Wizard* caught up to Busiek. And in between writing numerous scripts and taking bites of a pork egg foo young sandwich, he found some time to...well...chew the fat.

Kurt Busiek

JEFF SMI

Vital Stats

Name: Kurt Busiek
Occupation: Comic book writer
Born: September 16, 1960
Base of Operations: Vancouver, Wash.
Career Highlights: *Power Man and Iron Fist*, *Red Tornado* mini-series, *ShadowHawk* and *Vampirella* before hitting it big with *Marvels* and then *Astro City*, *Thunderbolts* and *Untold Tales of Spider-Man*.
Favorite City: Portland, Ore.— "[It has] more movie screens per capita than anywhere else in the country. *Everything* plays here."

Busiek (left) is hoping that he can finally emerge from the shadow of his breakthrough title Marvels. *He is slated to be joined by fan-favorite artist George Pérez on* The Avengers *(below)*

WIZARD: Even though you haven't signed the papers yet, what would be your approach to *Iron Man?*

KURT BUSIEK: I am a long-time Iron Man fan. I have always liked Iron Man because Iron Man, to my mind, is four characters in one. He's an adventurer, an inventor, a businessman and a ladies man. All four of these aspects could support a series on their own, and Iron Man is four of 'em at once. So Iron Man is a multi-faceted character with a lot of possibilities.

Iron Man is also one of the few early Marvel Universe characters who doesn't have a motivating crisis. He got the armor to save his life, then he got back to the states and kept being Iron Man. Well, he had to wear the chestplate to keep him alive, but he didn't have to go around being Iron Man. Unlike Spider-Man, there is no Uncle Ben there. He's had his business destroyed, he's become an alcoholic, he's had fiancées kill themselves. He's been through an awful lot as a result of being Iron Man and yet he still does it. So the question I would like to resolve fairly early on is, "Who is Tony Stark? Why did he become the kind of person who would do this?"

And the other thing I really like about Iron Man is that he's got this weird secret identity set up. How many other superheroes pose as their own employee? It's not just the idea of that, it's the fact that Iron Man traditionally interacts with the same people Tony Stark does, but they think he's a different guy. So when Iron Man is in the

room, people can talk about Tony as if he's not there, and Iron Man—behind this iron wall—is hearing people talk about himself.

What would the series be like?

I think *Iron Man* should be a book about suspense and intrigue. I think there should be enemies all around, whether it's corporate enemies or villains like the Mandarin. I think there should be a healthy dose of shadows, intrigue and paranoia in the book and I hope to be getting that in there.

How are you going to handle the fact that right before "Heroes Reborn," Tony Stark actually died, and was replaced by a teenage Tony Stark?

[*Choke*] Excuse me, I was just clearing my throat...We're going to be solving the teen Tony problem before the book starts. The plan is for the "Heroes Return" books to start out clean, so readers can step into it even if they know nothing about Iron Man. We'll start out from ground zero, tell you who he is and get moving. We will have an adult Tony Stark who remembers everything. You know how the Batman on the animated series isn't any of the existing DC continuity Batmans? He's kind of like the boiled-down essence of the best of all of them. That's the Tony Stark I want. And it may take some jumpin' and juggling to get him to that spot, but we'll do all that behind the scenes so the readers don't have to think about it. It'll either be addressed before [the first] issue or in an annual somewhere. It's just not gonna bog us down.

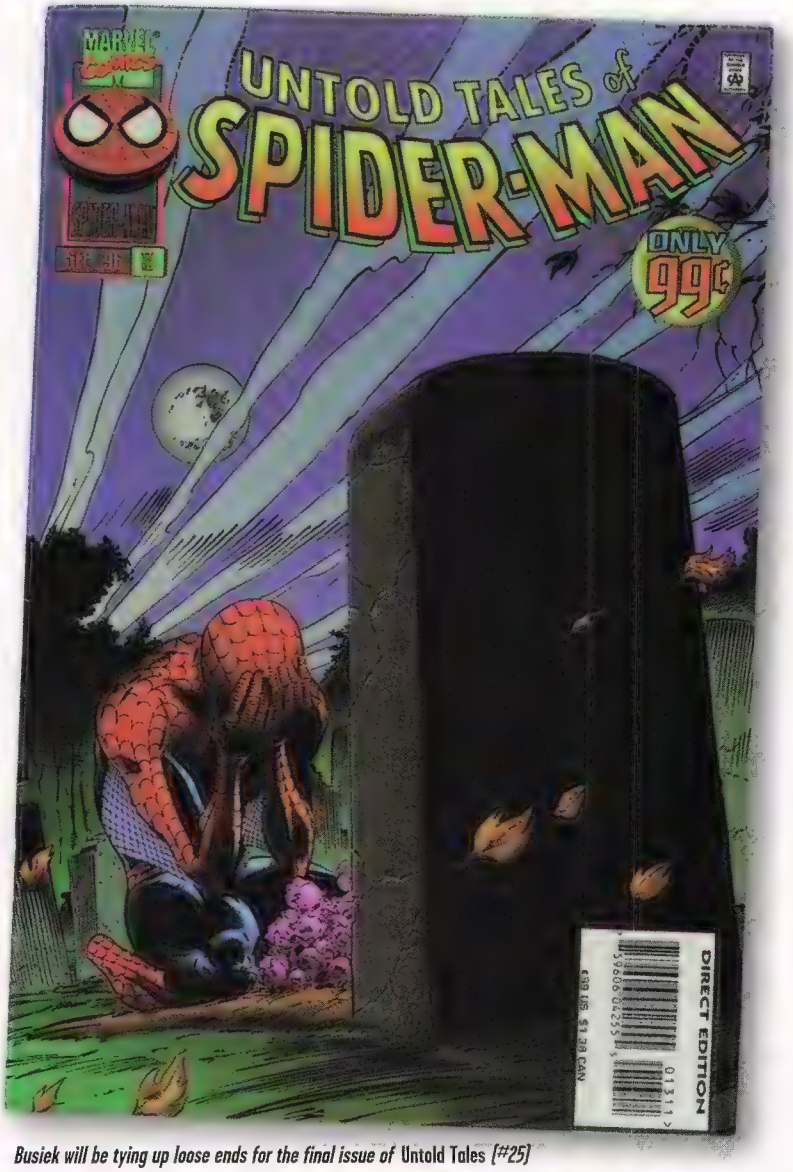
You mentioned in *Marvels* #0 that you and Alex Ross made a pitch for Iron Man that was rejected. Will your new proposal be similar to the old one?

I made a pitch for *Iron Man* three times. I was beaten out by David Michelinie, John Byrne and Len Kaminski. So I've worked up a lot of different Iron Man ideas, and many of the ideas from the earlier proposals have made their way into this proposal. But *Iron Man* is a book that I have wanted to write for probably 20 years now. So it feels very good to be this close to actually getting to put some of these ideas in print.

Which armor are you planning on using?

One you haven't seen before. We have some sweeping changes in mind for Tony's set-up and relationship with the armor, the way the armor works in the series. But one of the traditions of *Iron Man*, particularly in recent years, is: start a new era on the book, get a new suit of armor. When Tony comes back from "Heroes Reborn," he won't simply be wearing the "Heroes Reborn" suit, since that'll sort of get left behind. We haven't worked out the details yet, but I don't see that he's gonna go back to the suit he was wearing immediately before "Heroes Reborn"—for one thing, he's a good six inches taller! We have some specific ideas of how we can make it the next generation of cool, cutting-edge looking armor. I've always liked the red and gold look, but it's a little too early to say.

And how about the Avengers? Who makes your team?



Busiek will be tying up loose ends for the final issue of Untold Tales *[#25]*

To my mind, the Avengers works best when you've got kind of a two-level structure. You've got to have the big guns. You've gotta have Thor, Iron Man and Captain America. Maybe not all of them every issue, but they're the core of the Avengers. They're the power hitters. They're the people that make the team Earth's Mightiest Heroes. And then around them, you've got the sort of resident Avengers. The people who are living in the mansion. For them, *Avengers* is their home title. I think a real classic period for this was when Steve Englehart was writing the book and Thor, Iron Man and Captain America were kinda setting policy for the team and responding to the big adventure stuff. And the Vision and Scarlet Witch, and the Swordsman and Mantis are having this romantic squabble going on. So you've got the big grand glorious heroic stuff, and you've also got the cool-textured, involved personal stuff. So George [Pérez, artist currently slated for *Avengers*] and I are planning a team that will have that flavor, that will have a core of big guns and other characters around that will flesh out the team.

What sort of feel would you want with the title?

We want it to be a mixture of big cosmic adventure and involving personal stories. To my mind, if you look over Avengers' history, the villains are rarely stand-out guys. Even in the great Avengers stories that you remember, like the Kree/Skrull War, who were the villains in that? They were a bunch of Skrulls with guns. Wow. I'm shakin'. It was the atmosphere of it. It was what was going on with the Avengers characters, with the Vision having to save Wanda because he hadn't declared his love for her. We want to do big epics. We want to start off with a bang, but not with some big, extended, cosmic thing. We want to start off with something that gets everything set in place, so everyone wants to know what's going to happen and explore the team for a little while. Keep things hopping, keep a variety of villains going on, from supervillains to conspiracies to terrorists, always with a costumed superpower element to it. The best way I could put it is classic Avengers-type stuff.

Sounding Kurt

Here's a brief look at what the future holds for *Astro City* and *Thunderbolts*, according to writer Kurt Busiek.

Astro City

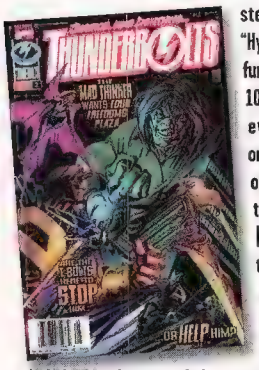
After the current sidekick story wraps up in April, the book will be going back to shorter stories for four months. Issue #10 is a self-contained tale of a supervillain called the Junkman. "The Junkman has come up with the perfect crime," says Busiek. "We'll get to see how that affects him and the world around him, and what it's like to be one of those guys who says, 'I'll show em! I'll show em all!'"

Following that, look for a two-parter involving Jack in the Box that will reveal his origin, as well as tell a multi-level story about fathers and sons and responsibility. Up next is another one-parter starring Looney Leo, a cartoon character that was brought to life in the 1940s and has been alive ever since. Readers got a glimpse of the restaurant he runs in *Astro City* (vol. 2) #1.

"After that, we're gonna do another longer story about a supervillain named Steeljack. He's just outta jail and he wants to go straight. But he's head-to-toe stainless steel, so it's kinda hard to get a straight job. He gets involved in a larger, more complex plot and we're gonna explore him for a little while."

Thunderbolts

Issue #6 starts the first extended story, a three-parter seeing the return of a group of Avengers' villains called the Elements of Doom. "They're little chemical monsters," says Busiek. "Hydrogen is one. Sulfur is another. There's 105 of them, one for every element. We only got to see seven or eight of them in their first story [*Avengers* #188]. So they're gonna be making a lot of trouble for New York. And the Thunderbolts are the ones who're gonna have to deal with it. It's going to be crucial that they get access to the Avengers' records because the Avengers have fought these guys in the past."



Issue #9-#10 will be dealing with "Heroes Return," and then Busiek plans to "build up to the final manipulations of Baron Zemo and the explosion that wraps up the first meta-arc of *Thunderbolts*." ■ *AK*

Your creator-owned *Astro City* has really been picking up steam lately, garnering tons of critical acclaim. What does Astro City mean to you?

What *Astro City* is to my mind is a vehicle. The superhero genre is a rich compelling genre, and there's gotta be millions and millions of pages of superhero stories done, but very few of them explore the genre beyond just the commercial thriller formula. I've always been fascinated by what else you can do with the superhero story. So *Astro City* is designed to be a book in which I can do anything with superheroes. I can go anywhere. So metaphorically, I think of the superhero genre as a big area and we've been building this city in one corner of it. The city has gotten bigger and more complex. What I've built with *Astro City* is a car, and I'm gonna go driving all over the place looking for the stuff we haven't done.

Where is *Astro City* heading? Do you have an ending in sight?

I don't have an ending in mind, so much as I know that toward the end there's one story I'm saving till then. Near the end, I will tell the story of how *Astro City* got its name. There've been hints dropped already in the books. But no, this isn't *Sandman*, this isn't something where it's a story and I know where it's going and where it ends. I would like to go 10-15 years [on it]. This is not a destination; this is a journey.

Part of the book's success is your unique writing style, where you're continually changing characters and points of view. Will you eventually settle down with one main cast?

This is an ensemble cast book, but it's an ensemble cast of about 3,000 or 4,000. We'll tell a lot of one-issue, shorter stories, and probably have a maximum length of six issues on any one story. If you don't like where the series is at the moment, in a couple of months we'll be dealing with another character, doing something else. The only ongoing character is the city and we will even have stories that don't take place in the city.

There are rumors that you're leaving *Untold Tales of Spider-Man* because you've run out of "untold tales" to tell. Any truth?

I am leaving *Untold Tales*. They are canceling it at issue #25. I could certainly think of more untold tales to tell, but I've been thinking of them for two years now, and I have the opportunity to do other things where I can vary my workload some more. I was planning to leave *Untold Tales* and start another creator-owned book. And then Marvel offered me *Avengers* and *Iron Man*...

How do you plan on ending *Untold Tales*?

We'll be wrapping up all the plotlines. We've got things like Batwing living with the Connors family in Florida, but the next time he shows up in Spider-Man continuity, Batwing ain't there. We're gonna do something with Betty's mom, because shortly after Peter goes to college [in *Amazing Spider-Man* #31], Betty leaves town for a little while, which is not something she can really do with a comatose mom. So we've gotta do something about Betty's mom. Also, Jason is in the middle of a plotline that we're gonna have to resolve. He took some advice from the Vulture: Hate Spider-Man.

Would you ever be interested in writing a current continuity Spider-Man title?

The problem with the current continuity Spidey is that there are four core titles, the new *Marvel Team-Up* series and *Spider-Man Unlimited*. So anybody who's writing one of those, only gets to write a piece of Spider-Man. You're kinda dealing with consensus. In my case, I have a collaborator. His name is Stan Lee. He's done. [*Laughs*] I know everything he did and all I have to do is match that. With Spider-Man or Superman or Batman or X-Men, you are sharing those characters every single time. I think that would be hard.

You recently took readers by storm with the end of *Thunderbolts* #1, revealing that the starring "heroes" are really the Masters of Evil in disguise. Will you be changing the book's direction, now that "Heroes Reborn" is ending and all the heroes are returning?

We've always figured that the heroes were coming back and we worked that into our plans for *Thunderbolts*. Back when I started reading comics, I was dumb enough that I [thought] maybe Spider-Man would die next issue. And that feeling that I didn't know what was going to happen was one of the reasons that I liked the X-Men when they came back [in 1975-76] with Chris Claremont writing. I had no idea what was gonna happen. It was really exciting. And the great thing I'm enjoying about *Thunderbolts*, is the readers don't know what we're gonna do. The series is going to go in some different directions. I mean we are going to build up to a revelation, where Baron Zemo's plan finally kicks in. But we have places to go after that.

How are the Thunderbolts going to react to the Avengers' return?

[*Laughs*] You can't figure that Baron Zemo is gonna be happy about it. But they're not in a position to say "Ha! There can't be any Avengers anymore. We got the job." So there's not a whole lot they can do about it aside from making sure that whatever plans they've got come to fruition soon enough, so that Avengers won't be able to do anything about it.

Looking at your current and upcoming workload, did you ever envision you'd be this involved in comics?

I didn't ever imagine that I would be about to write my two favorite comic books at the same time. But I've always seen myself as writing four books a month and being a full-time comics writer. And that's where I am. W

Andrew Kardon is real ticked off that he's not considered one of the Avengers' "big guns." After all, he's not afraid of a buncha Skrulls with guns.

WILDC.A.T.S X-MEN

The Silver Age

They Meet Again!

Scott Lobdell
Jim Lee
Scott Williams

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COMING IN JUNE

FROM WILDSTORM PRODUCTIONS AND IMAGE COMICS

Amalgamania

the top 10 Amalgams 'Wizard' wants to see

It's the coolest idea we've ever seen.

It's Amalgam Comics, where heavyweight publishers Marvel and DC Comics combine some of their premier characters into one. With 24 Amalgam one-shot issues to date, the roster includes such kick-ass characters as Super-Soldier (combining elements of DC's Superman and Marvel's Captain America), Dark Claw (Batman and Wolverine) and Spider-Boy (Superboy and Spider-Man), to name a few.

As soon as the *Wizard* staff caught wind of the idea, our minds raced with the nigh-endless possibilities but then we got to thinking: Why stop with just Marvel and DC? Why not mix in characters from other publishers as well? And why not put our ideas to paper, whip up some origins for our characters, get some top talent to design 'em and have 'em colored by Twilight Graphics? And while this is all in the name of good fun, we're hopin' you dig 'em as much as we do. (And hey, if you did, write Marvel and DC and tell 'em. If enough of you write, maybe we'll see these guys pop up in more than just a "Here's what we'd like to see..." feature in *Wizard*.)

By the Wizard Staff

Hell's Angel

Art: Jim Balent

When Diana, a princess of the Amazonian island Themyscira (Paradise Island), was mysteriously murdered, she turned to her Greek gods for help in restoring her life and punishing her killer. Rejected by the gods on Mt. Olympus, Diana looked for help in Hades…at a terrible price. In exchange for her soul, Diana was returned *five years later*, a hellspawn with mystical powers. With Paradise Island in utter ruins, and all her Amazon sisters dead, all Diana found was a tiny clue to the killer's origin. This clue led her away from Themyscira and into the world of men where she thirsts for the blood of her people's executioner as…**Hell's Angel!**

Armageddon

Art: Steven Hughes and Jimmy Palmiotti

An abused teenager, Robert Bruce Fairchild took solace in the lonely safety of the desert, away from the family strife and the cruelty of his classmates…until the night he wandered onto a gamma bomb test site. There, in a blast of a radioactive inferno, Fairchild died and in his wake was born a hulking, gamma-irradiated creature with massive strength, nigh-invulnerability and the ability to wake the dead. Now having the power to back up his anger, the creature that was once Fairchild has one wish: to make the world feel his pain, the pain of…**Armageddon!**

Blade Runner

Art: Mike Wieringo and Jimmy Palmiotti

Meet Logan West: the fastest man alive…and the most dangerous. Trapped in a secret government lab, West was prematurely freed when a lightning bolt struck his experimental tank. Mysteriously equipped with an adamantium-laced skeleton and claws, the lightning granted him superspeed, a rapid healing factor and enhanced senses. West took advantage of his newfound abilities and freedom to exact revenge on those who had held him against his will and stolen his memories. Now he's America's top assassin, fighting to unlock the mysteries of his past under the codename…**Blade Runner!**

Dark Knight

Art: Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti

Frail 23-year-old Steven Wayne was tossed aside as his parents were mercilessly gunned down by thieves. The killers were captured and released on a technicality, and Wayne saw the American Dream crash down around him. Too weak to lash out, his destiny unfurled when he discovered a secret super-soldier serum in his father's laboratory and drank the only sample. His body transformed to the pinnacle of human perfection, Wayne spent years training to become the perfect fighting machine. Now, donning the mantle of a bat to instill fear in criminals' hearts, he fights for those who can't fight for themselves as...**the Dark Knight!**

Ra's al Doom

Art: Stuart Immonen and Jimmy Palmiotti

Raised by gentle Gypsies in the hills of Latveria, Ra's al Doom's world was shattered the day his parents were assassinated by Latverian soldiers. Bitter and jaded, Doom grew to believe himself superior to the rest of humanity. Bent on world conquest, he traveled through Asia amassing great knowledge and unearthing the mystical Lazarus Pit, a device that prolongs life...but scars the body horribly. Now plotting to raze the Earth and rebuild it in his image, he might hide his disfigured body with his armor, but the world trembles at his name...**Ra's al Doom!**

Spider-Mite

Art: Mike Wieringo and Jimmy Palmiotti

Attending a science exposition on white dwarf star radiation, high school student Peter Palmer was bitten by a spider irradiated by the mysterious rays. Gaining the proportionate strength and agility of a spider, a "spider-sense" warning him of danger and the ability to shrink to microscopic size, Palmer would come to learn with great power comes great responsibility. Now, as a high school student by day and crimefighter by night, Palmer patrols the streets of Manhattan as... the spectacular **Spider-Mite!**

Asylum

Art: Jim Balent

Stumbling upon a corrupt government experiment on alien symbiotes, investigative reporter Eddie Brock was ready to blow its cover when, in a scuffle with security guards, the vat housing the symbiotes was ruptured, smothering him with the aliens—forever bonding the aliens to his body. Now, driven to madness by dozens of alien voices screaming for vengeance in his mind, Brock uses his mysterious, alien-spawned powers to find some measure of peace by silencing all the voices on Earth as the psychotic villain known as...**Asylum!**

Wild Card

Art: Brett Booth and Jimmy Palmiotti

Deep in the heart of steamy New Orleans, the infamous Thieves Guild took on its toughest assignment…and its last. Hired by the government to steal a vial of Gen X-Factor serum from a rogue scientific base, all seven of the Guild members were exposed to the serum, granting them incredible powers. Wanting to cover its tracks, the government managed to kill everyone in the Guild…save for one: Remy Cash. With enhanced senses and abilities, as well as the power to release the latent kinetic energy of any inanimate object, Cash fights to stay alive and avenge his teammates as…**Wild Card!**

Witch Hunt

Art: Steven Hughes and Jimmy Palmiotti

Undercover cop Sara Hope said goodbye to her simple life the night she stumbled upon a horde of demons trying to unlock the power of a mystical gauntlet known as the "Witchblade." Beaten to the brink of death by the creatures, Hope was reborn when the gauntlet attached itself to her, transforming her into a being of raw power and energy. After vanquishing the demons, Hope became aware of the demonic influences in the world, and now spends her days protecting humanity as a cop, and her nights fighting demons as Earth's paranormal protector…**Witch Hunt!**

Supermanta

Art: Jerry Ordway and Jimmy Palmiotti

Rocketed from the doomed aquatic world of Krypton, the infant Namor-El crashed onto a similarly water-based planet: Earth. Adopted by the king and queen of the underwater continent Atlantis, Namor-El was raised by the monarchy as one of its own. Accustomed to water pressure at any depth, Namor-El is nigh-invulnerable, can breathe underwater, has super-strength and incredible stamina. Now, acting as a liaison between Atlantis and the surface world, Namor-El has become the ultimate ecological warrior traveling the world's oceans fighting for conservation, preservation and the Atlantean way as...**Supermanta!**

After coming up with the ideas for these Amalgams, naming 'em, giving 'em origins and working with the artists to design 'em, the *Wizard* staff would like nothing more than to actually write a comic with them in it. Heck, we'd do it for free.

SUMMER SIZZLERS

WIZARD'S GUIDE TO THIS SUMMER'S HOTTEST READING

BY MATTHEW BRADY

Who needs sunburn, bee stings, heatstroke and dehydration? Instead, keep that pallid fanboy complexion by staying inside every day this summer to read comics! Not just any comics, though—the 50 hottest titles of the summer that showcase today's top talents. And just so you don't have to call all the creators up yourself and ask what's happening with your favorite books, we've done it for you. All you've gotta do is read up, and you'll impress your friends, family, neighbors and pets. So stop reading this intro already and get on with it!

AQUAMAN

CREATIVE TEAM: Peter David, Jim Calafiore & Peter Palmiotti

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: After singlehandedly turning back an alien invasion and being crowned king of all Atlantis, Aquaman found that he was changing, and not in a good way. Every day, Aquaman is getting...fishier. He's grown scales and claws, a physical manifestation of the inner turmoil going on inside him. All his changes have alienated his comrades, leaving him to wander the seas searching for answers.

WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: Things hit the fan with #35, as a number of political subplots start boiling, resulting in problems between Aquaman, Koryak and Vulko. Meanwhile, Aquaman's main squeeze, Dolphin, has started a fling with Tempest, leading to a major blow-out between Aquaman and the one-time Aqualad. Also, Deep Blue starts hitting on Aquaman, but the villain Nimbus is hitting on Deep Blue. (What a soap opera!)

DOWN THE ROAD: Poseidonis opens its doors for surface world tourism! Look for Dr. Polaris to make a grab for the floating city, something Aquaman will have problems with. Later in the year, look for things to heat up between the sea and surface worlds as Charybdis and the Ocean Master team up to take out Aquaman...and any continents in the way.

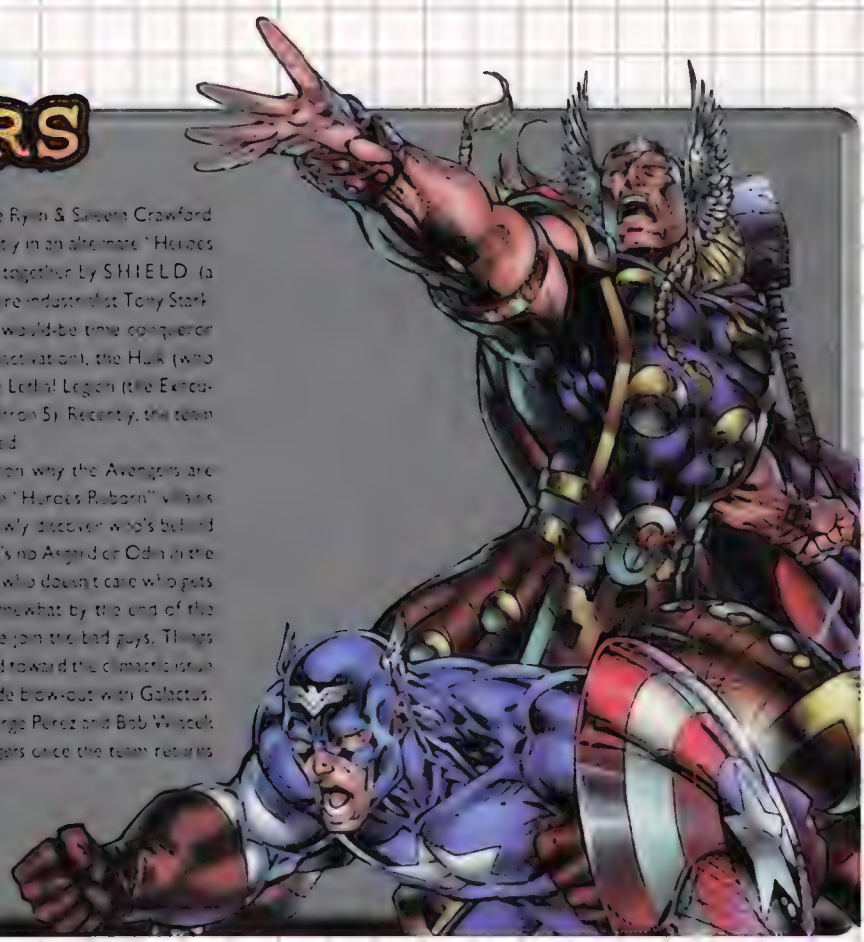
THE INSIDE SCOOP: Having alternated between Jim Calafiore and Marty Egeland as artists for its first three years, Aquaman's art chores are now being handled by Calafiore and Palmiotti every month.

ASTRO CITY

CREATIVE TEAM: Kurt Busiek, Brent Anderson & Will Blyberg
WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: In the current story line, the mysterious vigilante known as the Confessor took Brian Kinney as an apprentice, giving him the name Altar Boy. But Brian eventually discovered that the Confessor is a vampire with a dark side.
WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: AC #9 will wrap up the six-part sidekick story and tie everything together, including the Alien Invasion, the crimes in Shadow Hill, the mystery of the Confessor, and how Altar Boy fits into all of this. The summer will showcase more of AC's characters, such as the Junkman (a crusty old superhero), the Black Raptor, Looney Leo (a cartoon lion) and MFH, and look for a two-part focus on Jack-in-the-Box and his future descendants.
DOWN THE ROAD: Later this year, AC's next extended arc will kick off, telling the story of the struggles of a superhero who's just out of jail and trying to go straight. Also, the Wizard Astro City #1/2 issue will be reprinted, along with the current sidekick story arc (#4-#9), in a trade paperback later this year.
THE INSIDE SCOOP: While Busiek isn't too anxious to exploit Astro City in terms of action figures, he hasn't ruled out collectibles, such as a Samaritan statue. Also, Busiek is looking into producing an Astro City 50-card set with art by different creators.

AVENGERS

CREATIVE TEAM: Walt Simonson, Mike Ryan & Suzanne Crawford
WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: Currently in an alternate "Heroes Reborn" reality, the Avengers were drawn together by S.H.I.E.L.D. (a government espionage division) and millionaire industrialist Tony Stark. Since then, the Avengers have battled the would-be time conqueror Kang (a battle which caused the Vision's destruction), the Hulk (who was defeated with Iron Man's help), and the Lethal Legion (the Executioner, the Enchantress, Wonder Man and Ultron Six). Recently, the team broke up as S.H.I.E.L.D. ties and Iron Man joined.
WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: The reason why the Avengers are suddenly getting their butts kicked by all the "Heroes Reborn" villains will be made clear as Cap and Hank Pym slowly discover who's behind all of the villains' activities — Loki. Since there's no Asgard or Odin in the "HR" Universe, there's no restraint on Loki, who doesn't care who gets hurt. Look for the team to be altered somewhat by the end of the series, as new Avengers show up, and some join the bad guys. Things will continue to heat up as the Avengers head toward the climactic issue #12, the big "Heroes Reborn" Universe-wide blow-out with Galactus.
THE INSIDE SCOOP: Kurt Busiek, George Perez and Bob Wiacek are rumored to be taking the reins of Avengers once the team returns to the Marvel Universe this fall.



BATMAN BOOKS

CREATIVE TEAM: [illegible]

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: [illegible]

WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: [illegible]

DOWN THE ROAD: [illegible]

THE INSIDE SCOOP: [illegible]

CAPTAIN AMERICA

CREATIVE TEAM: [illegible]

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: [illegible]

WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: [illegible]

THE INSIDE SCOOP: [illegible]

THE DARKNESS

CREATIVE TEAM: David Wohl, Christina Z., Marc Silvestri & Batt

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: Empowered with the Darkness, mob hitman Jackie Estacado is suddenly a player in a much bigger game. The Darkness Queen and her Angelus warriors want him dead, while the Brotherhood of Darkness wants him on its side. In snubbing them both, Jackie's found himself turning out to be a good guy, a strange role for a hitman.

WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: Jackie's world heats up as he goes against the Brotherhood to save his friend Jenny. Starting with #7, Jackie learns more about his power and its ancient origin in a storyline that will fill up the summer and lead into issue #9 and #10's crossover with Witchblade. There, Sara Pezzini and Jackie will learn more about each other and their vast powers, which stem from forces created in ancient times to destroy one another.

DOWN THE ROAD: Garth Ennis returns as regular writer with #11, and plans to take the series down an even darker, more magical-based road.

THE INSIDE SCOOP: Issue #7 will have seven different covers, each illustrating one of the seven deadly sins. Be sure to catch the Witchblade/Darkness trading card set coming up this fall, just in time for Witchblade Month (October) and Darkness Month (November). Also, while nothing has been signed yet, Top Cow is getting lots of attention from studios itching to make a Darkness movie.

FANTASTIC FOUR

CREATIVE TEAM: Jim Lee, Brandon Choi, Brett Booth & Scott Williams

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: Reborn in the "Heroes Reborn" Universe, the FF has had its hands full from the start, as the team's faced the Mole Man and Sub-Mariner, while avoiding the omnipresent Nick Fury. Since their initial outing, the four have joined with the Black Panther against Doctor Doom and the Super-Skrull to save the injured Silver Surfer, and then traveled to the Himalayas in issues #8 and #9 to discover the mystery behind the Inhumans.

WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: Issue #10's a quiet issue, allowing the team members to adjust to all the changes they've been through recently. Sue will make a startling announcement, but before anyone can say congratulations, the peace is shattered by the arrival of Galactus' six other heralds, as it becomes apparent that the Surfer was just the cosmic point man, scoping out planets for the big G to chow down on. *Fantastic Four* #11 will feature the heralds setting up Galactus' planet-eating machinery all around the globe. A major battle's in the works for issue #12 as the FF, and everyone else, must stop Galactus or die trying.

THE INSIDE SCOOP: Word from inside Marvel is that Scott Lobdell has the inside track to pick up the writing chores of *FF* when the team returns from "Heroes Reborn," teaming with artist Adam Kubert.

THE FLASH

CREATIVE TEAM: Mark Waid, Brian Augustyn, Grant Morrison, Mark Millar, Paul Ryan & John Nyberg

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: Despite everything he's done for the city, Wally West was run out of Keystone City, and he now lives in Mount Morris, Calif., working more by day, and returning to Keystone by night. Since he's been there, he's faced the mysterious Mr. Frost and the cowardly Hour Demon.

WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: Waid and Augustyn finish their run with the three-part "Hell to Pay" (issues #127-#129), bringing back the Rogues's Gallery, with no less ranking their heels in Hell with Underworld Unlimited. To get rid of 'em, Wally just may make a deal with Mirror Master and Major Disaster, all their plotting winding up with an SE, starting with Wally getting injured by a few villains, a change of threads, and the introduction of the ultimate Flash villain—The Black Flash, the personification of the dark side of the Speed Force. Oh, and Wally's girlfriend Linda gets sucked into the Speed Force.

DOWN THE ROAD: Other twists coming up involve an alien speedster challenging Wally to a race—with Earth's fate in the balance, the return of the League of Assassins' Cheetah, and a Pre-Crisis reunion, teaming Wally with Green Arrow and Green Lantern (in spirit). Following Morrison and Millar's lead, Waid and Augustyn return with "Flash Lightning," which investigates the Allen line of speedsters through time, from Barry to Impulse.

THE INSIDE SCOOP: Waid's busy at work on his version of The Life Story of the Flash, a novelization of the adventures of Barry Allen, the Silver Age Flash. Plans call for the book to be 199 pgs. long, with illustrations by Gil Kane.

GEN13

CREATIVE TEAM: Brandon Choi, J. Scott Campbell & Alex Garner

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: Caitlin Fairchild, the super-powered teen, has joined college life, but, hey, she's gone rogue and returned and Bay Ley. College don't last long, as the kids found themselves turned by overbearing International Corporations crooks, who tried to return the kids to IO at big cost.

WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: While on the run from IO, Freefall, Fairchild and Grunge get picked up by aliens looking for biological specimens. This will dropped them into a lawless space station and we know the kids get picked up and prodded by Rob, who appears, something that has the commander for Grunge. After overcoming the aliens, the kids go prisoner, escape a deadly Drolm transport ship on the edge of the solar system and return to Earth with a strong message. Dare to Drolm to prepare to die.

DOWN THE ROAD: Getting home won't be easy, as the kids return to an Earth 10 years in the future, finding a Gen-Factor originally not seen or see by John Lynch.

THE INSIDE SCOOP: Look for a few changes in the team following their return to the current timeline. Will the—maybe even the chance of a new member to join, possibly including one from the future (Cat, you say Cat?!?). Also, Jack Kane's proof will tap down from the ceiling for #23-#25 while he plays the kid's long-awaited Batman Gen 13 Special.

GENERATION X

CREATIVE TEAM: James Robinson, Scott Lobdell, Chris Bachalo & Mark Buckingham

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: The kids in Generation X have grown up real fast in the last few months, as they were apparently betrayed by Mondo, saw Mondo get killed, get kidnapped by Black Tom, were blown out of the air over the Atlantic Ocean, saw Jubilee get kidnapped by Zero Tolerance's Bastion, and watched Skin lose control of his powers in a bad way. Sheesh.

WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: During the "Zero Tolerance" event, the kids will be cooling their heels in L.A., Skin's home turf. Skin finally resolves the issues he's been running from since #1, and the team's reunited as someone finally breaks free. The team will be at full strength just in time to face the Sentinels, who are out mutant-hunting in L.A.

DOWN THE ROAD: At press time, the writing chores of the book were up in the air, as Robinson will leave following his four-issue writing stint. Lobdell may return, but it's uncertain.

THE INSIDE SCOOP: A hush-hush *Generation X Special* is coming out at the end of the year—something so different and unexpected, Marvel's keeping it under wraps until later this year.

GREEN LANTERN

CREATIVE TEAM: Ron Marz, Darryl Banks & Terry Austin

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: After Kyle and the Martian Manhunter held back an alien invasion all by their lonesomes, our resident Green Lantern faced the greatest threat of all: introducing his girlfriend Donna to his mom, whom he hasn't spoken to in years.

WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: Kyle finishes visiting his mom in #89, which also features a battle with the Machine Messiah, liberator of machines everywhere. Then Kyle gets tortured by DeSade as part of the "Genesis" crossover, which sets the stage for Donna's imminent departure from the book (sniff). Following that, it's guest stars galore, including Green Arrow, Deadman and Superboy, along with GL teaming up with Green Arrow for a three-part crossover starting in *Green Arrow* #125 and exploring racial tension in the U.S.

DOWN THE ROAD: GL is getting closer and closer to #100, and the momentum starts building later this year with the return of the villain Grayven, and a trip to the 30th century. Security on what's happening in #100 is pretty tight, but word is something's gonna happen that everyone wants but doesn't expect. (Hint: Rhymes with Hal Jordan.)

THE INSIDE SCOOP: May's Green Lantern (Kyle Rayner) statue was part one of three interlocking GL statues. The other two will feature Hal Jordan (mid-1998) and Alan Scott (late 1998). Also, check out this fall's painted GL hardcover by Marz and Brad Parker (Marvel's *Code of Honor*).

GAINING STEAM

Wanna know what we'll all be talking about this time next year? Be sure to check out what these other steamy buzz books by the biggest and brightest publishers in the industry have in store for this summer!

This series will focus more on Ashley Quinn (rather than his alter ego Ash) as Russian and American mobs start a turf war over the block containing Ashley's firehouse. Not content to do the job themselves, both sides hire super-muscle—Molotov for the Ruskies and Smoke for the Americans—and both intend to raze the entire city block. Don't expect Ash to survive in his current state when all is said and done.

Following "Zero Tolerance," Cable hits the ground running as he breaks into the X-Mansion to grab Professor X's secret files before Bastion can get his hands on 'em, as well as rescue the mutant-tracking Caliban from Bastion's custody. Then look for Cable to distance himself from the X-Universe, and start hanging in the more mainline Marvel Universe, with the likes of Captain America, Black Panther and the Inhumans.

INCREDIBLE HULK

CREATIVE TEAM: Peter David, Adam Kubert & Mark Farmer

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: Since the Bruce Banner aspect of the Hulk left him at the end of last fall's "Onslaught" crossover, he's been...different. Wanting to be left alone, the Hulk claimed one of the Florida Keys as his own island for a while, only to realize that being a ruler wasn't all it's cracked up to be. And on top of it all, it was revealed in issue #-1 that Banner had killed his own father.

WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: Plans call for a run-in with the X-Men, as the big guy heads to Westchester County. Not finding any sympathy, the Hulk tears out of the X-Mansion, and into Apocalypse, who wants him for his Fourth Horseman, a job the Hulk might be antisocial enough to take. Also, keep your eyes peeled for a shocking return from someone long gone from the Hulk's past.

DOWN THE ROAD: David says he's out to remind readers that *anything* can happen at any time in *Hulk*, so be on the lookout for some shocking and totally unexpected character developments later this year, including this summer's major happenings with Betty Banner.

THE INSIDE SCOOP: Thanks to Marvel Comics fans at Toy Biz, we'll be getting more Hulk toys this summer! The latest out of the gate include Hulk 2099, Absorbing Man, Smart Hulk and Maestro.

IRON MAN

CREATIVE TEAM: Jeph Loeb, Ryan Benjamin, Saleem Crawford, J.D. & Scott Williams

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: Mortally wounded by the "Heroes Reborn" version of the Hulk, millionaire industrialist Tony Stark donned experimental armor to survive, becoming the hero known as Iron Man. IM recently joined the Avengers and Stark bankrolled the team, allowing them to break from S.H.I.E.L.D. sponsorship. Just as his life was calming down, Rebel, the original wearer of the experimental armor, reappeared and took Tony down, exposing him to the man behind HYDRA's plans...the Mandarin.

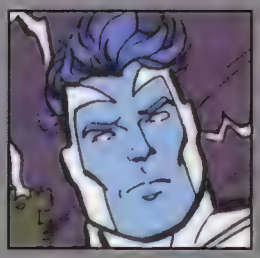
WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: Following his confrontation with Rebel and his discovery that the Mandarin's responsible for HYDRA's infiltration of Stark Enterprises, Stark's further investigation reveals who's pulling the Mandarin's strings. Stark and the Mandarin's master duke it out in #11, a sequel of sorts to the classic *Iron Man* #150 (Hint: Iron Man will meet his doom—get it?). Issue #12 sees the hero called upon to help defend Earth against the unstoppable Galactus.

THE INSIDE SCOOP: Fans of the "Reborn" Iron Man should keep an eye out for the Iron Man Toy Biz figure based on the "HR"-redesigned armored avenger. As for the title's future, Kurt Busiek and an unnamed artist are a contract away from writing Shellhead when he returns to the Marvel Universe this fall.

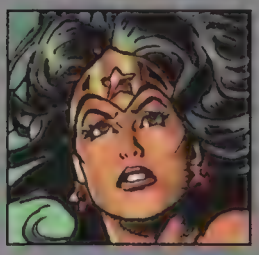
JLA

CREATIVE TEAM: Grant Morrison, Howard Porter & John Dell

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: DC's big guns (Batman, Superman, Wonder Woman, Flash, Green Lantern, Aquaman and Martian Manhunter) have rejoined to form the greatest Justice League of any era. The team fought off a Martian invasion, had a membership drive and then got themselves caught up in a war with Heaven.

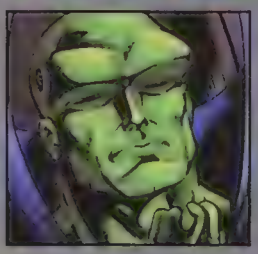


WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: Following the war with Heaven, the JLA gets wiped out by the Key with only Green Arrow to save them in issues #8 and #9. JLA Month kicks off in July with #10, the beginning of a six-part epic pitting the JLA against the Injustice Gang, led by Lex Luthor. The Gang's first strike: a corporate takeover of the JLA, one that can only be fought by Bruce Wayne! The second strike: evil doppelgangers of the JLA created to kill the heroes. However, the battle has an unknown cost: If evil wins, Darkseid gets to conquer Earth. Hoo boy.

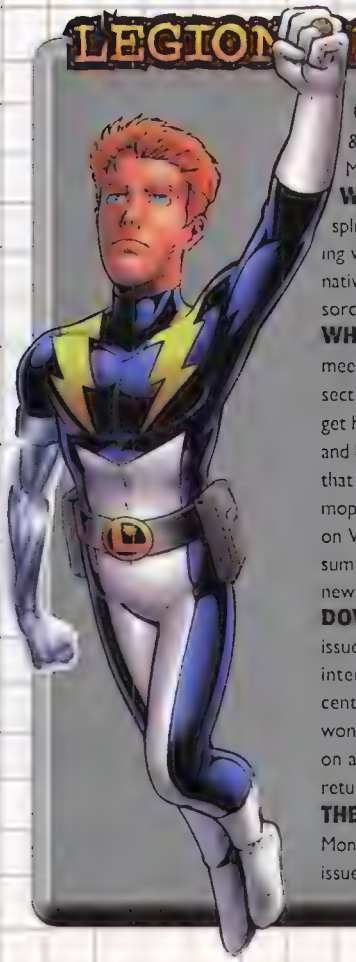


DOWN THE ROAD: In a nutshell: The *JLA/WildC.A.T.s* mini-series hits shelves this summer, a prestige *JLA Special* pits the JLA against the revamped Injustice Gang and a couple of new members join the superteam in early 1998.

THE INSIDE SCOOP: Other JLA Month projects to keep an eye out for: The winged angel Zauriel gets his own four-part mini-series written by Mark Millar; a *JLA Gallery*, a JLA issue of *DCU Secret Files* featuring a Phil Jimenez pin-up of every JLA member ever (Zoinks!), and a JLA T-shirt.



LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES



CREATIVE TEAM: Tom Peyer, Tom McCraw, Lee Moder & Ron Boyd (*Legion of Super-Heroes*); Roger Stern, Tom McCraw, Jeffrey Moy & W.C. Carani (*Legionnaires*)

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: The Legion's currently split in two—one team stuck in the 20th century (*LSH*), dealing with threats such as Dr. Psycho, and the other half in their native 30th century (*Legionnaires*), dealing with the threat of the sorcerer Mordru.

WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: The 20th-century team will meet up with the Metal Men, critters Brainiac 5 can't wait to dissect! A wedding happens in issue #96, as Rokk and Imra finally get hitched. The team will take part in the "Genesis" crossover, and Brainy finally builds his supercomputer, Computo, a prospect that will affect Triad forever! In the 30th century, the team will mop up after its confrontation with Mordru. Issue #52 will focus on Violet, showcasing her startling new power. The rest of the summer features single-issue stories dealing with the Legion's newest recruits, including Monstrous and Magno.

DOWN THE ROAD: Things are building up to *LSH* #100, an issue with plenty of stories. From there, the books will start to intertwine as things move towards the return of the 20th-century team to the 30th century. However, things at home won't be like the heroes remembered, as conflicts are building on a galactic scale, forcing all past and present Legionnaires to return to active duty.

THE INSIDE SCOOP: Plans are in the works for a "Legion Month" at DC, with tie-ins and possibly a Legion one-shot, around issue *LSH* #100.

CATWOMAN

Following *Catwoman* #48-#49, where Catwoman gets recruited by the international crime syndicate S.P.I.D.E.R., Catty's in for some big changes as she hits #50. After barely escaping from Cyber-Cat with her life, Catwoman will be getting an all-new, more protective costume. Issues #51-#53 finally resolve the subplot with cop McShane, who's been ordered to bring down Catwoman.

CURSE OF THE SPAWN

Angela's story will be the focus of *Curse* #9-#11. This arc follows the Spawn killer through her life, death and rebirth as a spirit, and the personal choices she made that led her to become a warrior angel. Look for the story to be a darker, edgier take on the tough redhead. Later in the year, look for a story featuring Priest, the female assassin who replaces Chapel in the Spawn mythos and movie.

DAREDEVIL

DD teams up with Deadpool in *Daredevil '97* to take on Typhoid Mary. Next up, Mr. Fear traps Matt Murdock in a prison riot, and a new Gladiator debuts, as does a new group of psychos called The Three. DD's summer will wind up with a Black Widow team-up, featuring the return of the Soviet Super Soldiers.

DV8

The kids bid farewell to Warren Ellis and Humberto Ramos with issue #8, and welcome new creative team Mike Heisler and Juvaun Kirby. The DV8ers kick off the summer with a rescue attempt of their mentor Ivana Baiul, which puts their loyalties to the test. Later in the summer, DV8 experiences the seedier side of the intelligence world in the DV8/Black Ops mini-series.

EXCALIBUR

This summer, Excalibur faces some big roster shake-ups, including new and old characters. The changes kick off when the team visits Rory Campbell, and runs into a ghost from Kitty Pryde's past, which sends Kitty to America to find Wolverine. From there, the team gets scattered throughout Europe, where strange things start happening—things that may be connected to Wundagore Mountain. By year's end, look for a completely different Excalibur team.

GREEN ARROW

Connor Hawke visits his granddad in issues #123-#124—seems Gramps and his neighbors have been having trouble with a local shaman who's extorting the locals during the summer drought. The catch is, if you don't pay him to make rain, you wind up mysteriously dead. Also, Connor will team up with Green Lantern for a three-parter starting in #125.

PREACHER

CREATIVE TEAM: Garth Ennis & Steve Dillon

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: Following Jesse and Tulip's rescue of Cassidy from the hands of the Crusaders, the true connection between Jesse and the Grail was revealed to the surprise of all.

WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: Things get cookin' Cajun-style for the crew as they move to New Orleans for a while, so you can bet on seeing lots of voodoo action and even some of New O's own blood drinkers. Adair only, secrets from Cassidy's past that he neglected to tell anyone about will be returning in a nasty way, with dire implications for all involved.

DOWN THE ROAD: Tensions will begin to heat up between Tulip, Jesse and Cassidy, thanks to Cassidy's revelation of his feelings for Tulip. Also, the return of Arseface will uncover how he fits into the whole mess, and Jesse will continue his search for God.

THE INSIDE SCOOP: Hear those rumors about *Preacher* being banned in Australia due to its content? Don't worry, all you Aussies out there, they were just nasty Internet rumors. Also, keep your ears and eyes to the ground, pilgrim—there may just be a Preacher statue riding into stores in the near future.

SPAWN

CREATIVE TEAM: Todd McFarlane, Greg Capullo & Danny Miki

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: Having returned from his recent trip to Hell, Spawn has told his former partner Terry who he is, and they've joined forces to take down their former boss Jason Wynn, who's now being aided by the Clown. In doing so, Spawn has rescued a former prisoner of Wynn's, and stretched his relationship with Terry to its breaking point.

WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: The Wynn/Clown subplot will take a back seat as Spawn will focus on detectives Sam and Twitch, and the alleyways Spawn inhabits. Despite his working with Terry, things will stay touchy, as Spawn still has tunnel vision in his need to reach his goals, while Terry wants a slower approach. Look for Priest, the character responsible for Spawn's original death, to make an appearance in August.

DOWN THE ROAD: A serious mafia-type story featuring Tony Twist is in the works for later this year, along with subtle subplots that will slightly reflect the upcoming movie.

THE INSIDE SCOOP: While the second season of the Spawn animated series is already in the works, those stories will reflect themes and story elements that McFarlane doesn't plan to cover until issues #90-#100 of the regular comic, giving readers and viewers their money's worth.

SPIDER-MAN BOOKS

CREATIVE TEAM: Tom DeFalco, Steve Skroce & Bud LaRosa (*Amazing Spider-Man*); Todd Dezago, Mike Wieringo & Richard Case (*Sensational Spider-Man*); Howard Mackie, John Romita Jr. & Scott Hanna (*Peter Parker: Spider-Man*); J.M. DeMatteis, Luke Ross & Dan Green (*Spectacular Spider-Man*)

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: Spidey's life has been full of adventure lately: Over in *Sensational*, Spidey's been to the Savage Land and back, while he's also gone against the newly revamped Electro in *Amazing*, gone head to head with the Chameleon in *Spectacular* and fought organized crime in *Peter Parker*.

WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: In *Sensational*, look for Richard Case to temporarily take the penciler and co-plotter position as the Living Pharaoh returns, followed by Wieringo's return with a two-part Dr. Strange story. The real Dr. Octopus returns in an *Amazing Spider-Man* multi-parter, while *Peter Parker* will focus on the Empire State University chapter of Friends of Humanity, and the return of Shang-Chi. And over in *Spectacular*, the late, great Kraven returns. Also, look for July's *Spider-Man Special* to feature the final fight between Spidey and Venom. 'Nuff said!

DOWN THE ROAD: This fall, Stan Lee and John Romita Sr. team together on a *Kingpin* one-shot, examining the personality and motivations of the Marvel crimeworld's top tubbo. Later in the year, the four-part "Revelations" storyline that declared Pete as the true Spider-Man gets reprinted as a trade paperback with 10 additional pages of story in the final chapter.

THE INSIDE SCOOP: Expect to start hearing buzz about a Spider-movie again, as MGM has finally won the film rights. However, the big question is whether or not James Cameron ("Terminator 2") will have anything to do with it, since he has a multi-picture deal with Fox.

SUPERMAN BOOKS

CREATIVE TEAM: Stuart Immonen & José Marzan Jr. (*Action Comics*); Karl Kesel, Tom Grummett & Denis Rodier (*Adventures of Superman*); Dan Jurgens, Ron Frenz & Josef Rubinstein (*Superman*); Louise Simonson, Jon Bogdanove & Dennis Janke (*Superman: The Man of Steel*); Roger Stern, Paul Ryan & Brett Breeding (*Superman: The Man of Tomorrow*)

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: Okay, unless you live under a rock, you've noticed that Supes is wearing different duds and sportin' new, energy-based powers. Since taking on the new look, he's gotten advice from the Ray about controlling his new powers, gone up against Metallo, had to parachute into the bottle city of Kandor with the Atom to ease civil unrest, and to top it all off, had to help Luthor clear his name during his trial for crimes against Metropolis.

WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: Superman continues to adjust to his evolving powers throughout the summer, just in time for the "Genesis" crossover with the rest of the DC Universe. Meanwhile, Jimmy Olsen thinks he knows who Superman is, and is ready to reveal the info to the world: unfortunately, Intergang wants it first. With all the "Genesis" action, look for a return of the evil Cyborg, as Supes realizes that his computerized containment suit makes him a prime target for takeover by the Cyborg's computerized consciousness.

DOWN THE ROAD: Challenges continue for Clark Kent and Lois Lane, as Lois gets assigned to Australia, and Superman discovers the effect green Kryptonite has on his new form. Watch for Superman's new powers to evolve to a critical level this fall, resulting in some even more shocking changes!

THE INSIDE SCOOP: Don't like the new costume and powers? Chill. Plans are already in the works for Supes' 60th anniversary in 1998, and odds are that Kal-El will be in the old blue-and-red suit for the celebration. Also, thanks to the anniversary, expect plenty of specials and top talent to focus on Supes next year as well.

IMPULSE

Regular *Impulse* scribe Mark Waid takes a few months off this summer, leaving Bart Allen in the capable hands of Tom Peyer and Bill Loebs. This summer, Bart will search for his mentor Max Mercury, who's off facing down one of his oldest and deadliest villains, Dr. Morlo. Be sure to look for hints and clues to "Chain Lightning," the upcoming *Flash* storyline spreading into the pages of *Impulse* this summer and fall.

KA-ZAR

Ka-Zar wraps up his trip to the Big Apple around the same time of "Heroes Return," since he'll become a little redundant with so many heroes back in the city. Back home in the Savage Land, he'll go up against a big Marvel Universe bad guy—a villain way, waaay out of Ka-Zar's league, kinda like a mortal David fighting a cosmic Goliath.

[illegible]

Following Dick's nasty run-in with the Scarecrow, the current storyline will come to a violent conclusion in #11. Dick catches a runaway breaking into his apartment in issue #12, who he then must keep an eye on, as a gang marks the kid for death. Summer's end will offer a three-part Batman crossover, which shows Bats that Dick's doing a good job in Blüdhaven.

SPIDER

After Robin's forced to move the Spider and the Bat flee from the Baffler's own trap in #14, Robin's social life takes a downturn. When his fellow guards turn for the better, part of the summer, Robin's forced to work with the Spider and the GCPD to stop crime from his backseat. Also, look for a tie-in with the "Gotham" project this summer.

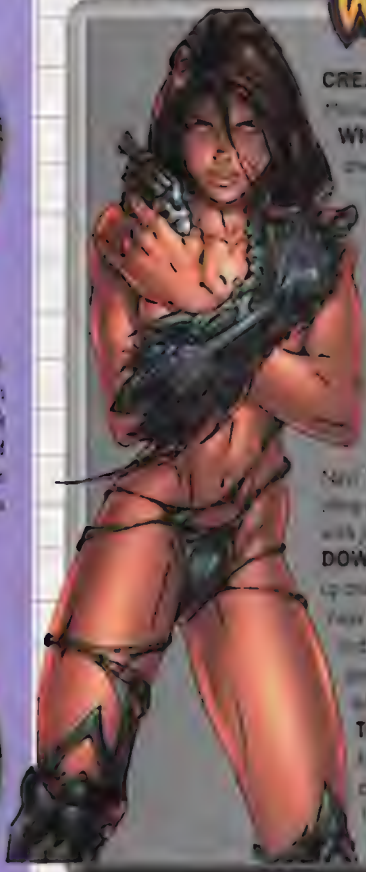
THUNDERBOLTS

Following their "relocating" day in New York in issue #5, Thunderbolts #6-#8 pits the team against the Elements of Doom, a forgotten DC member group of Avengers villain, manual other (What did I do the element). Then prepare for the "Bolts" reaction to "Heroes Reborn." Ooooo, that's gonna be good!

WILD C.A.T.S

The C.A.T.s will have to rescue members kidnapped by the Puritans this summer, but things take a turn for the worse when the Puritans' ultimate plan is revealed, rolling back of all chaos by going back in time to the initial landing of the Wildcats and Domination on Earth. Things start building towards an explosion in #50.

WITCHBLADE



CREATIVE TEAM: Christopher Z. David Wohl
Michael Turner & Ian Hall

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: [illegible] Witchblade. Detective Sara Pezzini's life has become more complicated by an [illegible] gang war, her growing feelings for her partner Jean, and not [illegible]. Worse, she isn't quite strong enough on her own strength. The only good news: she's [illegible] a [illegible] "Witchblade."

WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: [illegible] Witchblade, Sara will leave New York for a while, only to return when the gang war goes nuclear. Apparently she isn't [illegible] and is being manipulated by someone trying to get control of New York's underworld. As the gang war goes full tilt, Robert starts [illegible] Sara's past [illegible] to wreck her romance with Jean and a normal life once again.

DOWN THE ROAD: Look for the Darkness' power [illegible] to come up this fall as the relationship between the Witchblade and the Darkness becomes clearer. Also, more about the Witchblade's powers and its origin of course will be revealed, as the person from Sara's past [illegible] with a vengeance, eager to [illegible] back on the top of the hill.

THE INSIDE SCOOP: [illegible] for the Witchblade Overture to be [illegible] Fame in Toronto and others. Also, the "Witchblade" television show looks like a lock for the fall of 1998. [illegible] Witchblade comic [illegible] and Video game are in the works for [illegible]

WOLVERINE

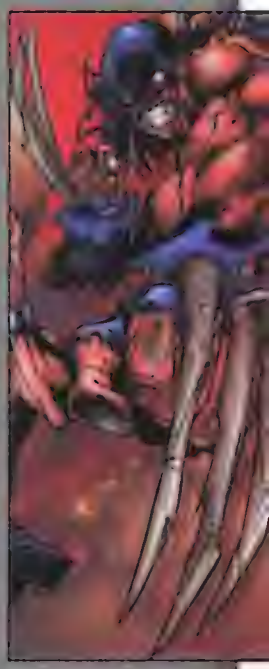
CREATIVE TEAM: Larry Hama, Anthony Winn & Dan Green

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: Since coming to terms with his [illegible] thanks to Bishop's help, Logan's tried to balance his animal and human sides while rescuing his adopted daughter Amiko from a madman. Moving on after a lengthy leave from the X-Men for a time, Logan moved to New York's East Village where he's trying to live a life as a normal joe, one day at a time.

WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: Wolverine's summer kicks off with a [illegible] "Sons Triumphant," as he's captured along with Cyclops, Jean Grey, Cannonball and Storm, and taken to Sentinel's base, the [illegible] Holocaster headquarters. Conveniently enough, that's where Bishop's being held prisoner as well. Can you say good escape? Following his adventures with the X-Men, Wolverine returns to his pad in Brooklyn to arrange that forces him to consider replacing something within him that's been good for a while.

DOWN THE ROAD: You begged for it. You pleaded for it. The time [illegible] is coming. Wolverine will finally be getting his adamantium back later this year; however, don't look for Apocalypse to be involved. The storyline leading up to the reclaiming will tie up some dangling plots about the adamantium itself, and will also reveal who was responsible for getting the metal metal inside Wolverine in the first place.

THE INSIDE SCOOP: Wolverine writer Larry Hama says that he was planned for Wolverine to be adamantium-less for about two months, but other story lines prevented the writer from returning his adamantium right away. By the time, he's just already taken a chunk of the hero's portion of Wolverine, so they let him use this way for a while.



#1
Beginning a whole new era teaming with Marvel's greatest heroes!
MARVEL TEAM-UP
THIS JULY STARRING SPIDER-MAN AND GENERATION X!
Tom Peyer
Pat Oliffe • Al Williamson
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X-MAN

CREATIVE TEAM: Terry Kavanagh, Roger Cruz & Bud LaRosa
WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: Following issue #25's blow-out with Madelyne Pryor and Jean Grey, Nate's had to live with the fact that his powers may be gone forever, and his anticipated death could be 'round the corner. Disillusioned with the X-Men's mission, and wanting to make every moment of his life count, Nate joined up with the Brotherhood, a team that showed Nate the darker side of mutant life.

WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: Following his departure from the Brotherhood, Nate returns to New York's Washington Square Park, where he used to offer people help with their problems. Unfortunately, fixing people's problems can have consequences, and Nate learns this the hard way when a trio of "human" girls who have it in for Nate show up, looking for trouble.

DOWN THE ROAD: Look for the Askani to make an appearance, as Cable and Jean Grey investigate why the Askani want Nate dead so badly. An X-Man bookshelf project is slated for this October, written by Kavanagh with art by Terry Dodson. Tying into its near-Halloween release, the story will be a gothic take on Nate, and will introduce a new villainess, Absynthe.

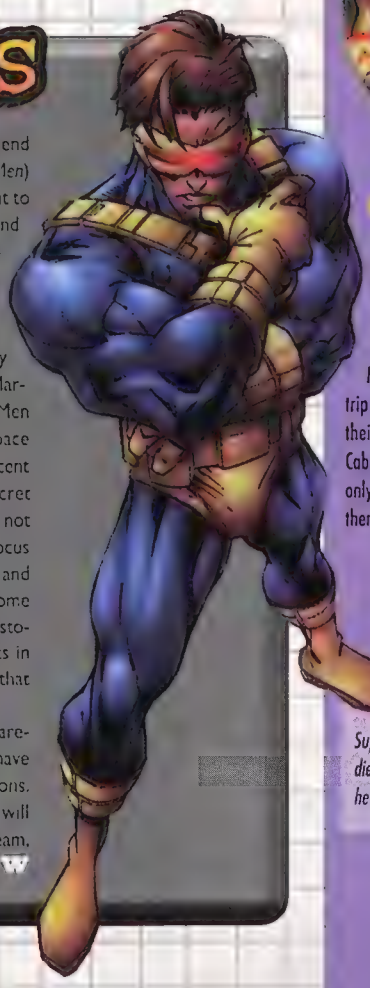
THE INSIDE SCOOP: Within the next year or so, writer Kavanagh hints that X-Man's power dilemma will be dealt with. And the climax *won't* be what readers expect.

X-FACTOR

The team faces some major shake-ups this summer as Sabretooth and Mystique return to their villainous, homicidal ways, a change that may place more than one team member in real danger. Their departure will herald the end of team action in the book, and a shift to stories about personalities and players in the mutant scene—individuals with an "X-factor" in their genes. Upcoming issues will feature Havok, Dark Beast, Sabretooth leading the Hounds, and the return of Mr. Sinister.

X-MEN BOOKS

CREATIVE TEAM: Scott Lobdell, Joe Madureira & Tim Townsend (*Uncanny X-Men*); Scott Lobdell, Carlos Pacheco & Art Thibert (*X-Men*)
WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: In *Uncanny*, the team's been out to space, where they've rescued the Shi'ar empire from the Phalanx, and found themselves far from home with no way back. Meanwhile, in *X-Men*, the team traveled to Hong Kong to investigate a cure for the Legacy Virus, and returned home to a major skirmish with the forces of Zero Tolerance.



WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: Look for an unlikely twist in *Uncanny* #346, which features Spider-Man in a knock-down drag-out with Marrow. Set in X-continuity, Lobdell guarantees it will be a strong X-Men story *without* the X-Men. The star-lost X-Men remain lost in space throughout the summer, running into Arkon, a dark enemy from recent times, and the Celestials. Also, Gambit gets reminded of his secret shame in an alien underworld, as he makes a decision that results in not everyone coming back to Earth together. Meanwhile, *X-Men* will focus on the experiences of the newest X-Man, Dr. Cecilia Reyes, as she and Iceman battle Sentinels in a blacked-out police station. After they come out of the "Zero Tolerance" anti-mutant storyline, look for *X-Men* stories to focus on the "here and now" experiences of the mutants in more everyday struggles, rather than the doom and gloom stories that the books have had recently.

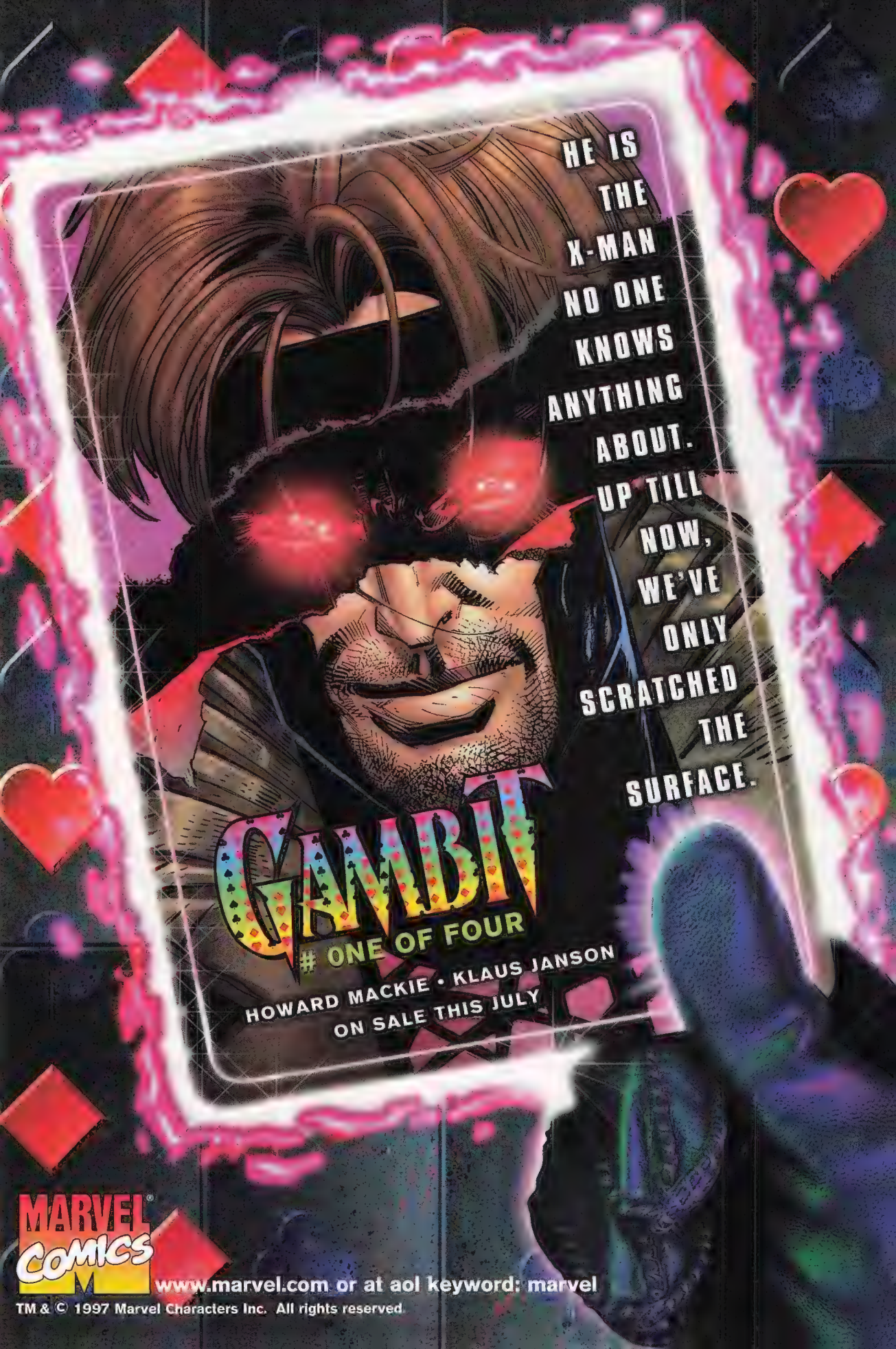
DOWN THE ROAD: Rumors are running rampant that Chris Claremont will return to the team he wrote for 17 years, as insiders have leaked the fact that they've seen Claremont at Marvel writer sessions.

THE INSIDE SCOOP: Word has it that the team's roster will undergo radical changes in '97, with many mainstays leaving the team, making room for newcomers and established Marvel mutants. W

X-FORCE

X-Force starts the summer trapped with the Mutant Liberation Front, who are going through their own version of a Waco-like siege. As a result of "Zero Tolerance," the team will realize they don't fit in at the X-Mansion anymore, and take a two-issue road trip out west, looking for a new place to hang their hats. Things get shaken up a little when Cable leaves for good in August, taking away the only adult supervision the kids had and leading them to even more trouble.

Superman's got nuthin' on Matthew Brady, who died three whole times to get this information. (We hear S.H.I.E.L.D. wants to hire the guy.)


HE IS THE X-MAN NO ONE KNOWS ANYTHING ABOUT. UP TILL NOW, WE'VE ONLY SCRATCHED THE SURFACE.
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Basic Training

this month's host: Terry Moore

How to Draw Realistic Women

I'm a cartoonist, but people tell me the female characters in my book, *Strangers in Paradise*, look like real women. So, what's that all about, huh? I mean, it can't be my skillful use of light and shadow, paints, textures or anatomical detail, because...well, I don't do that.

So it must be the way I try to infuse proper scale, body language and facial expressions into my characters. I believe these are basic principles every artist should strive for when they sit down to draw. Alex Raymond, Mike Allred, Paul Smith, Paul Pope, Jeff Smith...all these guys work in relative scale with dynamic use of body language and expressive faces to make their stories come alive.

So let's take a minute to look into this a little closer, okay? And again, since my stories center on women, I'll keep my focus on the female form.

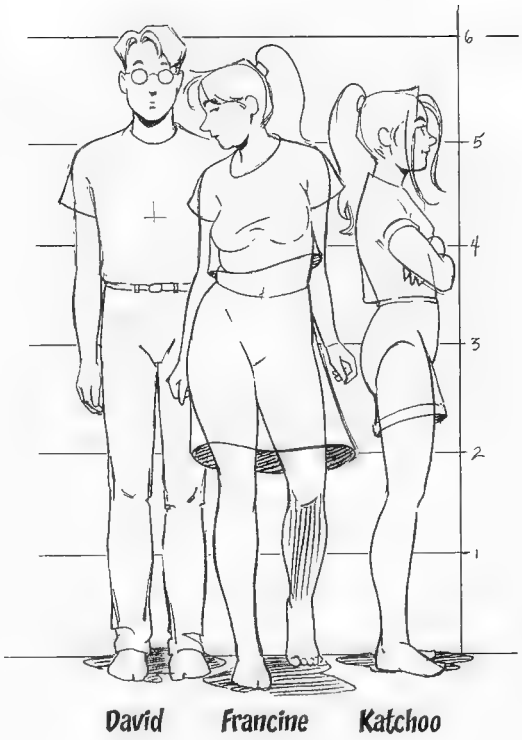
Bigger than Life

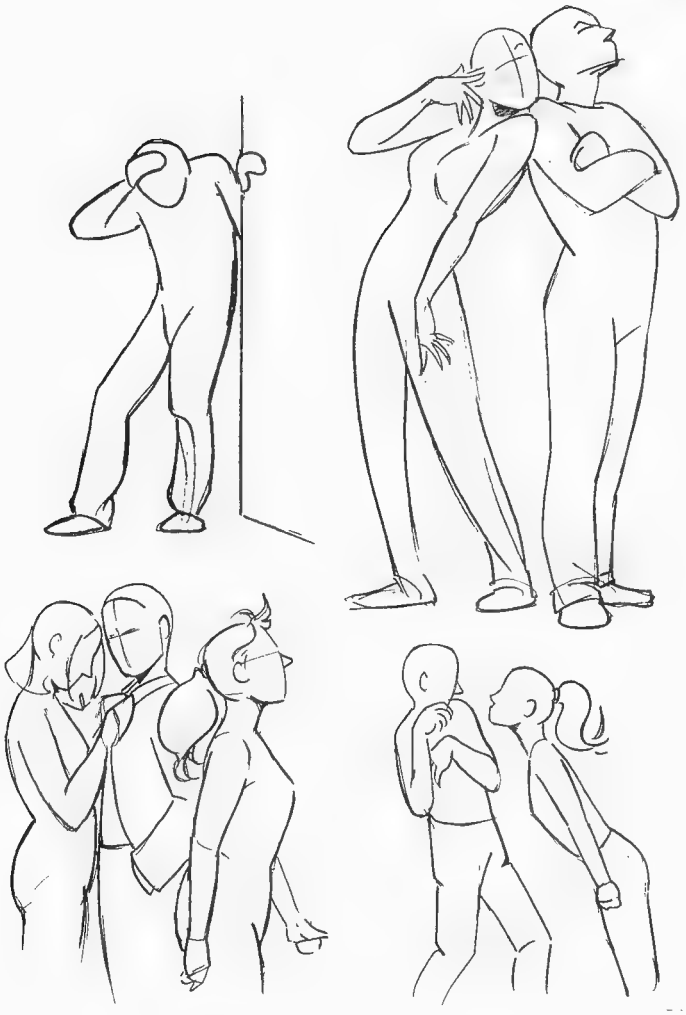
Let's start with the obvious. Female heroes look cool on paper, but they are deliberately exaggerated in an effort to make them more dynamic. That's fine; it's like the muscle thing with men. But you can reach a point where it's hard to relate. If you take the average woman and stand her next to the typical modern heroine, the differences would be pretty obvious.

Size Matters

Think about how tall your female characters are supposed to be. Don't make them all the same height, because nature doesn't work that way. Vary the heights on your characters and you'll find it helps you, and the reader, relate to them a little easier.

For instance, look at the police line-up we have here. You can see that David is about 6' tall, Francine is about 5'8", and for absolutely no reason whatsoever, Katchoo is approximately 5'4". Be sure to keep their individual heights in mind when drawing them together and adjust appropriately, depending on what kind of shoes they are wearing. Details like that count.





Body Language

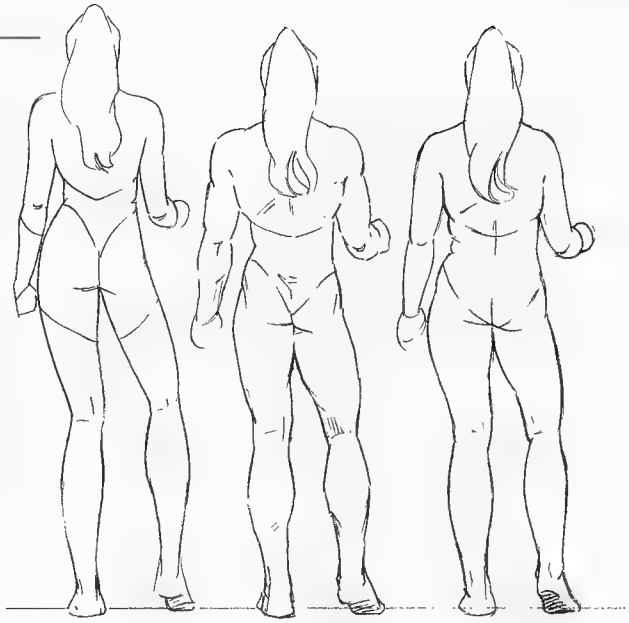
Once I have the basic form of my character in mind, I go back to my cartooning/animation training to get the pose. That's because in both fields, the priority is body language. Cartoonists don't care about anatomical realism—they want the pose to SING! But even superhero art is laid out in cartoony body language before any thought is given to things like muscles or uniforms. Why? Because it gives you the outline of where to put those things.

Look at the examples I've done here. Notice how they convey the moment and attitude of the characters—like devastation, seduction, coyness, arguing, etc.—without any details. That's how important body language is. I've done half my figure work in just a few quick lines. That means a lot when you're trying to do 80 zillion pages a day!

Body Building

It seems like such a mundane thing to say, but if you want your women characters to look real, then draw real women. Don't just draw an outline; think about things like flesh and bones. You're no different than a sculptor, shaping your figures on paper.

Look at this illustration of three women. The figure on the left is the female hero, as the artist typically draws her. The figure in the middle is what she would probably look like in real life. I mean, if you can lift tanks and punch through buildings, then you're going to have some meat on you, right? But look at the figure on the far right. That's what the average woman would look like in the same costume. (And believe me, she's not too happy about wearing it! Sorry, Francine!)



It's What's Inside that Counts

The figure on the left is a common pose in hero art, but it is also the most criticized. Why? Well, putting the exotic dancer pose aside, it's obvious that the forces of nature don't apply to this body—as opposed to the figure on the right, which displays muscle mass, room for internal organs, a working spinal column and gravitational effects.

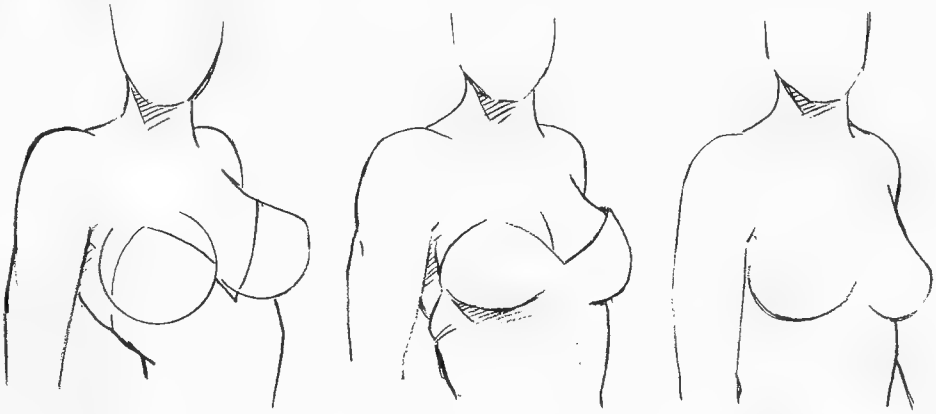
Let's be realistic; the instant that female hero raises her arms and straightens up, she's going to find herself in a very embarrassing predicament.

Gravity Works

Gravity. Now, that's a big deal for the artist and the female form. Let me show you how important gravity is to your figure.

Observe: The torso on the left is our hero, the center drawing is a more realistic example of a female form wearing the same suit, and on the right we see the same realistic form, unrestrained. This is how the female body is made. The bust is soft; it reacts to things like gravity and tight clothes. It really helps to understand this and incorporate it into your drawings, because the reader also possesses this knowledge, and these details make all the difference in your character's plausibility.

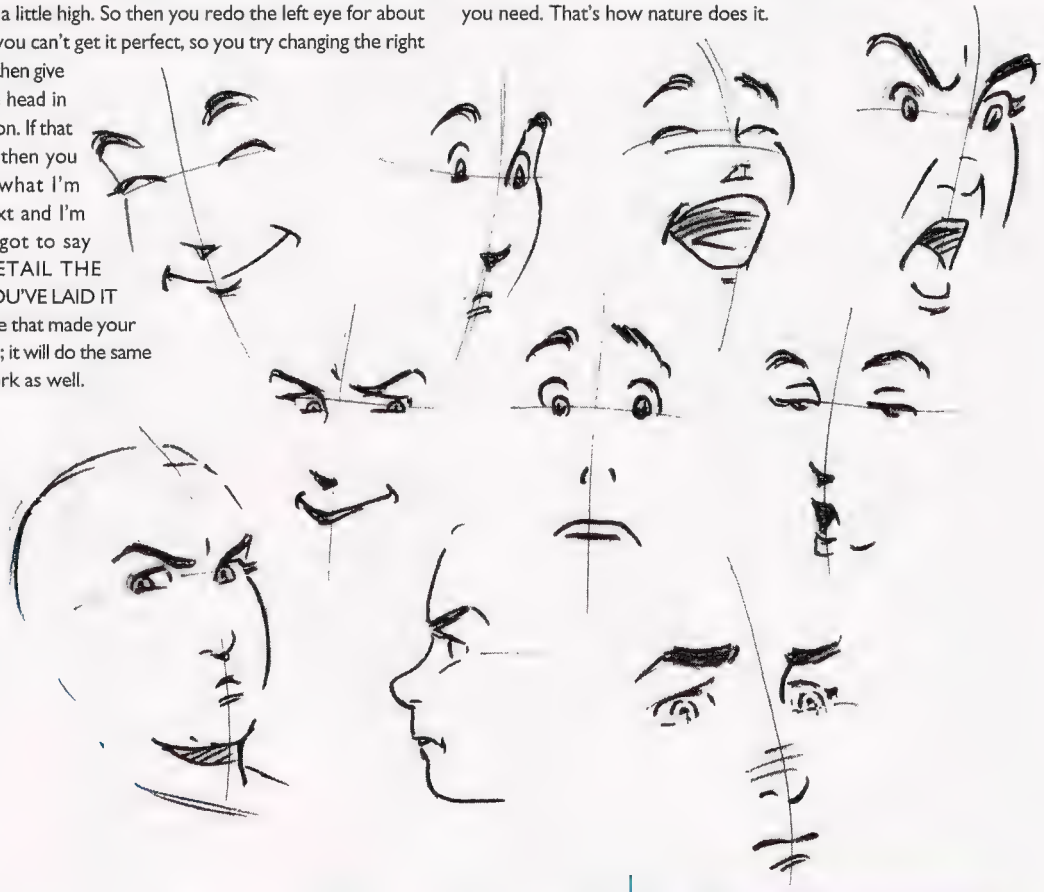
Remember, the female figure isn't a skinny teenage boy with tennis balls in his shirt, so don't draw it that way.



Be Expressive

After you've established your pose and figure, you're ready to fill in the details, beginning with the face. Before I tell you about creating expressions, I have to mention a common mistake, one even I do every day. You start off with one eye, finish it, move to the other eye, make it match, then put in the nose and mouth, and notice they make the left eye look a little high. So then you redo the left eye for about 20 minutes, but you can't get it perfect, so you try changing the right one instead, and then give up and draw the head in a different position. If that sounds familiar, then you already know what I'm going to say next and I'm sorry, but I've got to say it...DON'T DETAIL THE FACE UNTIL YOU'VE LAID IT OUT! It's the rule that made your figure look better; it will do the same for your face work as well.

An expression is captured in a few quick lines, just like the body language. Look at the examples I've drawn here. You don't need the head, hair, ears or body to convey the expression. It's all in the eyes, nose and mouth, isn't it? Also, see the range of motion in the features? Don't be afraid to stretch your character's face to get the expression you need. That's how nature does it.



Funny Face

If you try drawing the face with one finished detail after another, you'll end up with the infamous Asymmetrical Face, like the one on the left. Looks unprofessional, doesn't it? But why? Sure, it has all the proper rendering techniques, but the drawing itself is bad. The features are misaligned and the face lacks personality and expression. I was too busy trying to get the eyelashes and hair shading right. Compare that to the head on the right, which was very quickly done. I used only a few lines, but it's actually a much better drawing. The face is laid out correctly and the expression is locked in before you've wasted any time detailing (re: inking) a bad drawing.

The infamous Asymmetrical Face vs. the quick draft

And there you have it. I guess the trick to drawing realistic women is to know what real women look like. If this is your artistic goal, then your homework is obvious: Go look at some real women. And don't expect anyone to feel sorry for you! But, whatever you do, please don't try to learn by drawing the women in men's magazines or Victoria's Secret catalogs. Normal women don't look like that, and besides, who wants to draw a character made of SlimFast and silicone?! **W**

Terry Moore, whose realistic women can be seen just about every month in Image's Strangers in Paradise, *is happily married. So you better believe he knows what a real woman looks like.*

Not All The Witches You Know Are Evil...

Tales of the Witchblade 1/2

If you're like most comic fans out there, you crave one thing and one thing only—more *Witchblade*! That's one reason why Top Cow created its new *Tales of the Witchblade* series—so readers can double their excitement! Now, Top Cow and *Wizard* have joined forces to produce...drum roll, please...

Tales of the Witchblade #1/2! An all-original, all-exclusive story for the low price of just **three lousy bucks!** Plus, *TOTW* #1/2 features these tantalizing goodies:

- **One** all-new, all-different *Tales of the Witchblade* story!
- **Two** interesting story points—this tale is crucial to the history of the Witchblade saga *and* you'll see aspects of the Witchblade you've never seen before!
- **Three** awesome creators—writers Christina Z. and David Wohl, and artist Nathan Cabrera!
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- And the sharpest part of all—this is a *Tales of the Witchblade* comic you can't get anywhere else! Understand that, fanboy? This **exclusive** book is **only** available through this *Wizard* offer!

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image

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THIS OFFER EXPIRES AUGUST 13, 1997.

DC Comics, Fleer and Graphitti Designs Present

The Batman and Robin "Calling all Heroes" contest

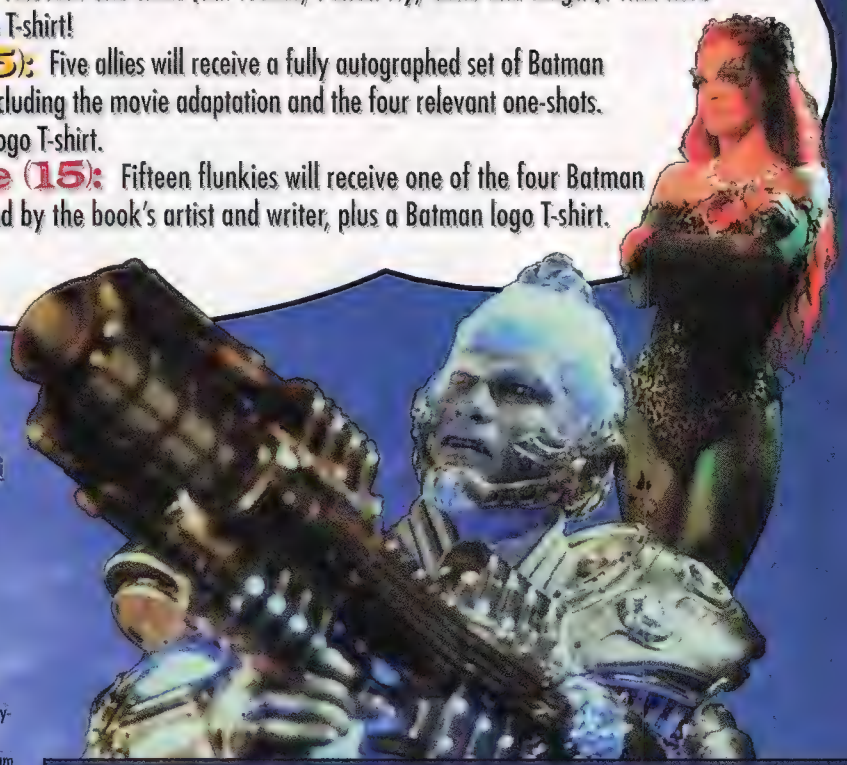
Here's whatcha need to do, hero:

Tell us in 50 words or less what kind of a hero you are (or would like to be). Give us your superhero name, the powers you possess, what kind of costume you would wear, etc. Then, if Batman and Robin feel you have what it takes to be a hero, you can aid them in their adventure and return home with some of these Batcave goodies:

Grand Prize (1): One hero will receive a Batman & Robin Fleer trading card set plus a fully autographed set of "Batman & Robin" movie comic books, including the movie adaptation and the four relevant one-shots (*Mr. Freeze, Poison Ivy, Bane* and *Batgirl*). That hero will also receive a Batman logo T-shirt!

First Prize (5): Five allies will receive a fully autographed set of Batman & Robin movie comic books, including the movie adaptation and the four relevant one-shots. They'll also receive a Batman logo T-shirt.

Second Prize (15): Fifteen flunkies will receive one of the four Batman related one-shots, autographed by the book's artist and writer, plus a Batman logo T-shirt.



This contest is sponsored by DC Comics, Graphitti Designs and Fleer, true life heroes.

The Legal Looting

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, DC Comics, Graphitti Designs, Fleer, their immediate families or whoever wrote that line "It's a hockey team from Hell!" from the Batman & Robin flick. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card and attach to hero description. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: Batman and Robin Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. If Poison Ivy kisses you and you get all crazy and stuff, what happens if you...you know...uhhh...oh, forget it. Warner Bros. will sue us out of existence if we follow that trail of thought. All entries must be received at contest headquarters by July 31, 1997. Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected based on creativity and originality from among all properly completed entries by Wizard Press. Drawing will take place on August 15, 1997.

For a list of winners, available after August 15, 1997, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Batman and Robin Contest Winners, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Fill this sucker out, attach your hero description, put both in an envelope and send it to: Batman and Robin Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Deadline is July 31, 1997.

"Calling All Heroes" Entry Form

DEADLINE IS JULY 31, 1997!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

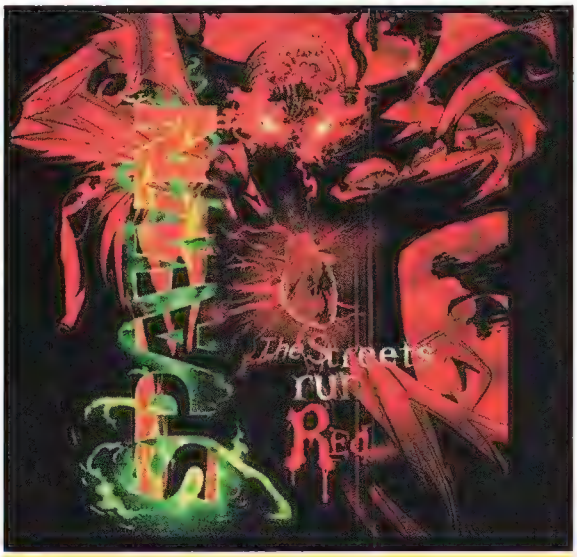
JUNK DRAWER

Little bits of everything in the world of comic-related merchandise

By David Borak and the *Wizard* Staff

SPAWNING A T-SHIRT

Everyone's going Spawn crazy these days. As if the most popular comic book on the market wasn't enough, Spawn's got an entire line of toys, an upcoming HBO animated series and a big Hollywood movie to boot! So, it's about time you started showing your Spawniness with some cool-looking Spawn T-shirts from Giant Manufacturing. First, there's the Spawn: Streets of Blood T-shirt which shows Spawn painting the streets as only he can. And then there's the Spawn: Stitches T-shirt which features a classic McFarlane close-up of ol' Spawny-guy on the front and a small Spawn icon on the back. Both these shirts are 100-percent cotton and come in large and extra-large sizes. Look for 'em in June at comic shops everywhere for $17.95 each.



Spawn Streets of Blood T-shirt

COLD-CAST BATGIRL

With Batgirl appearing in the new Batman movie, it's only fitting that she finally gets her own statue. Based upon designs by artist Brian Stelfreeze, William Paquet (Swamp Thing statue) has sculpted a version of the classic Barbara Gordon Batgirl from the comics. Mwwwroww! The statue is from DC Comics and features Batgirl, Batarang in hand, vaulting into crime-fighting action. And even cooler, you can find Gotham City graffiti on the back of the statue's base! Hand-painted and limited to just 5,500 copies, look for it in comic and specialty shops this June for $195.

Batgirl Statue

HAND-HELD HULK

Tired of those really cool Sega and Nintendo games with the great graphics and sound? Well, how about going back to those old-time LCD hand-held video games? Tiger Toys brings you a hand-held Incredible Hulk game based on the UPN animated series. The game's got multiple skill levels, and even an option to turn the sound off (so you don't annoy people on long car rides). Okay, so why pick this over Sega? Well, first off, you can play with it outside. But best of all, it costs a mere $14.99. Oh yeah...batteries not included.

Sin City Shot Glass

SHOTS FROM SIN CITY

If you've been to Sin City, you've undoubtedly been to

Kadie's Club Pecos. If so, you've probably stolen one of the shot glasses from the joint. But if you can't afford the trip, creator Frank Miller and Dark Horse Comics have gone for ya! The Sin City Shot Glass has a red-and-black silhouette of one of Kadie's urban cowgirl dancers on a clear 1 1/2 ounce glass. Get your shot glass at the end o' July, before it's last call at Kadie's. The cost is $5 a shot, and you can find 'em at most comic shops and specialty stores.

Product of the Month

MERRY MARVEL MUGS

Sometimes it takes a mighty mug to hold your beverage. Now, Applause Inc. has come up with mugs featuring the visages of the greatest heroes (and villain) from the Marvel Universe. Spider-Man, Hulk, Captain America and Doctor Doom have been captured in ceramic and fashioned into four of the coolest drink-holding containers ever! All these mugs have gold metallic detailing on their handles, except for the Hulk mug, which has granite detailing. These beauties can handle 14 oz. of pure liquid refreshment or approximately 30 pens, and cost $15 a pop.

And for the fumble-fingered, Applause is also offering plastic mugs of The Thing, Wolverine, Hulk and Spider-Man. These plastic mugs will hold 6 oz. of liquid, and set you back $5 apiece. Look for 'em all in fine or comic book and specialty stores.

Flaming Carrot Lighter

FLAMING CARROT ON FIRE

Ut! Get your flippers on, 'cause this lighter is hot! Bob Burden's insane superhero can now be found on his very own lighter. The Flaming Carrot: King of the Saucer Men Zippo Lighter shows the Flaming Carrot on one side with saucers in the background, and a big flying saucer on the back. The black-matte Zippo can be found at comic stores and specialty shops in July for $29.95.

BATMANIA AT THE WARNER BROS. STORE

For those of you who head straight for the DC Comics section when you enter any of the Warner Bros. Studio Stores around the country, you're in for a treat this spring. Look for the Batman Animated Mask Series which consists of sculpted masks cast in metal alloy and then highly polished. Based on Joker, Batman and Catwoman, each 5" X 7" mask is hand-numbered in an edition of 2,500, signed by the artist and individually gift-boxed for $55 each.

Also, look for a spiffy lithograph (14" X 38") with four separate sections featuring the women of Batman: Catwoman, Harley Quinn, Batgirl and Poison Ivy as rendered in "Batman: The Animated Series." Limited to only 500 framed lithographs, one o' these puppies'll set ya back $300.

All these items may be found at your local Warner Bros. Studio Store. Call 1-800-4-WARNER for the store nearest you.

THY KINGDOM COME (IN HARDCOVER!)

DC Comics and Graphitti Designs have teamed up to bring you *Kingdom Come: The Deluxe Slipcase Edition*. The book collects DC's ultra-cool Kingdom Come mini-series in a single-volume hardcover and includes 12 pages of unreleased story and art by Mark Waid and Alex Ross. This 232-page book also sports 18 pages of preliminary character sketches, cover legends, a key to cameo appearances, trading card and promotional art. Ross provides an all-new painted cover and Elliot S! Maggin (*Superman: Miracle Monday, Kingdom Come novelization*) contributes the book's introduction. This hardcover will be available in early July and

Catwoman, Harley Quinn, Batgirl and Poison Ivy Lithograph

Katchoo and Francine Magnets

carries a price tag of $29.95. Look for *Kingdom Come: The Deluxe Slipcase Edition* in all comic stores and most discriminating bookstores.

MAGNETS IN PARADISE

Looking for something to spice up your fridge? Well, spotlighting artwork by Terry Moore, Graphitti Designs' Strangers in Paradise Magnet Set comes with three magnets for just $6.95. You'll get one of Katchoo, one of Francine and one of that weird-looking flower design that pops up in the series. Look for the set in comic shops this June.

GOLD, BRONZE AND SILVER SURFERS

Bad breath? You could use a mint! Well, the Highland Mint is releasing bronze and silver replicas of the cover to Marvel Comics' *Silver Surfer* #1. Now you can own a mint version of the comic cover that made surfing through the cosmos popular. Best of all, Mint cards that sell out in bronze and silver will be produced in gold plating on silver. These 2 1/2" X 3 1/2" cards contain 4 1/4 ounces of silver or bronze (24-karat gold in the gold-plated version) and are individually numbered. Each card is packaged in a numbered album with a three-piece Lucite display, and a certificate of authenticity. The suggested retail prices are a mere $50 for bronze (limited to 2,500 copies), $235 for silver (limited to 500) and a whopping $500 for gold (limited to only 375). Call 1-800-544-6135 for the authorized Mint card dealer nearest you.

Check your local stores for availability of all these funky-fresh products. Or ask your friendly neighborhood comic store to special order 'em for ya!

HEY! Are you a comic company putting out some easy-cheesin' good fun in the form of comic-related merchandise like *The Hulk's Guide to Grammar*, the Wolverine nose-hair trimming set or the Bizarro Home-Surgery Kit? If so, we'd love to include 'em in our groovy "Junk Drawer" column. Of course, we'd also like statues, T-shirts, novelties, magnets, etc. Please send all info and sample products to:

Junk Drawer
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920

JUNK DRAWER video games

By Steve Brown

THE VIDEO GAME APOCALYPSE

We here at Wizard Central hope the overwhelmingly bleak portraits of the future, so splendidly painted by today's video game artists, are merely flights of nihilistic fantasy. Apocalyptic and massively downbeat, today's games are blueprints for the pessimism that's slowly been building in our society. Nowadays, anybody can roam war-torn wastelands and wreak havoc with a flick of the switch.

Don't get us wrong, we love death and destruction as much as the next monthly publication. Maybe it's just easier to translate the negative into the video game industry because it's a lot more interesting. But hey, who cares *why* they do it, as long as they keep doing it? Anyway, this month's reviews center on three somewhat destructive games. So don your combat boots and hit the trenches.

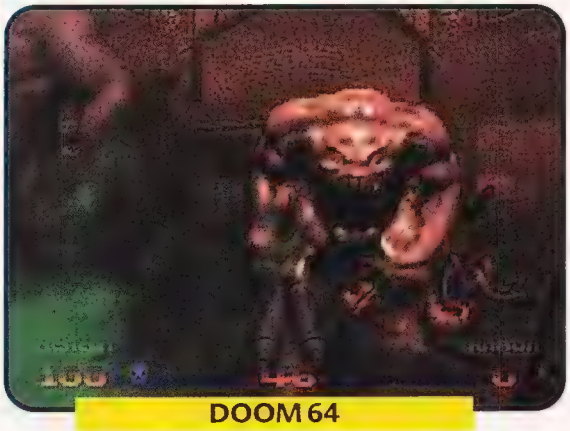
DOOM 64

MANUFACTURER: Midway
PLATFORM: Nintendo 64
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $69.99, available now

Based on Id software's best-selling computer game series, Midway's version of *DOOM* employs the best-looking graphics ever on the Nintendo 64. *DOOM 64* is a first-person perspective maze-shooter, featuring 30 new levels and redesigned weapons and monsters. Continuing where the other *DOOM*s left off, you play a U.S. marine in some pretty deep water. Apparently, some of the demons you've been fighting have survived and resurrected all the critters you previously killed. With all your fellow marines dead, you're the last hope to stop these abominations.

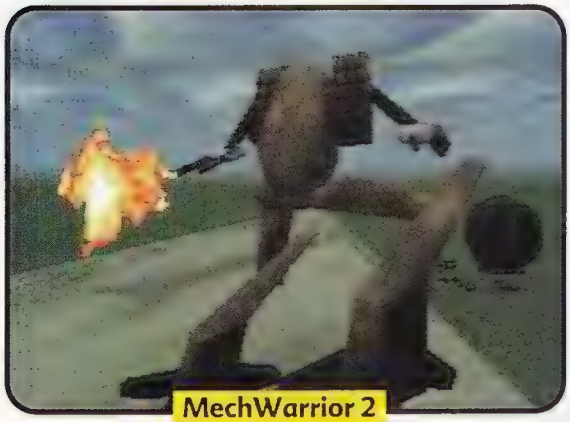
As strange as it seems, *DOOM 64* is the ultimate *DOOM*-clone. The PC versions of the game featured bland, pixelated mazes that had been cut from the same cookie cutter, making navigation through them an exercise in patience. *DOOM 64* juices up its mazes with added color variation, and overhanging platforms and balconies that spotlight the Nintendo's 3-D capabilities. Plus, the game's monsters look positively horrifying enough to scare even the most hardened soul.

Perfectly illustrating the point of this column's intro, *DOOM 64* revels in the evil world it creates and actually



DOOM 64

Independence Day



MechWarrior 2

fosters a high level of tension for a player. The spooky soundtrack, bizarre lighting effects and intense texture flow culminates in a truly frightening gaming experience.

Independence Day

MANUFACTURER: Fox Interactive
PLATFORM: PlayStation
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $49.99, available now

Based on last year's major motion picture starring Will Smith and Bill Pullman, *Independence Day* is a jet fighter simulation, where the object is to destroy the alien invaders' motherships. While the movie was super cheesy and predictable, we still kinda enjoyed it. Unfortunately, the game itself just doesn't match up. All the game's action takes place underneath the aliens' huge spaceships and is completely obscured by the background graphics. Sure, players can control 10 different fighter jets, but all the planes are pretty much the same. The levels are also highly repetitive. And while *Independence Day* boasts more than 13 levels of play, all the cities basically look the same, except for a recognizable monument in each of the game's levels.

A player must fire his weapons when the alien scoutships fly through his crosshairs (which is seldom). Otherwise, players fly around a restrictive environment trying to avoid cheap enemy hits. And the game's two-player (head-to-head) version is purely an exercise in bad logic. Why pit two fighter jets against each other? The whole idea of the movie was that all humans teamed up and worked together to destroy the aliens.

Independence Day is very conspicuous in its shortcomings. It lacks engaging gameplay, suffers from lapses in logic, is repetitive and poorly executed. As it is, *Independence Day* is just a bad movie translation.

MechWarrior 2

MANUFACTURER: Activision
PLATFORM: PlayStation, Sega Saturn
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $49.99, available now

Yet another port-over from PC consoles, *MechWarrior 2* has been redesigned with over 48 total missions (including 16 new ones), 12 diverse Mechs and simplified game controls. In its original PC form, *Mech 2* was a complex and brainy simulation. The programmers who translated the game to the 32-bit platforms certainly met their goal of converting it into an action shooter. The game's

graphics and speed have been updated—the end result being a mixture of *Soviet Strike* and *DOOM*, except a player gets to pilot a giant walking tank.

Players will have no problem getting a quick handle on how to use these war machines, but unfortunately the storyline is uninvolving. Set in the midst of a clan battle between the Wolves and the Falcons, users must complete a series of missions to gain points and move up in rank. Only when a player achieves the top rank of Khan can he complete the final stage.

Mech 2 is geared towards advanced players and, past the initial startup and maneuvering, has a high learning curve that might turn off all but the most advanced gamers. This official product of the Battletech Universe isn't for everyone. However, if you're a big Battletech fan, *Mech 2* delivers a deep and difficult excursion into mechanized warfare.

PLUG IN

The Latest in Video Game News

SPAWN'S BACK ON SCHEDULE

Originally set for an early 1997 debut, Sony withdrew *Spawn*'s shipping date without explanation. Unofficially, it was said to be held up in order to coincide with the upcoming "Spawn" movie. Nagging rumors of finished *Spawn* PlayStation games filtered through the video game industry, and some say the original version was so lousy Sony scrapped it completely. Whatever the truth, Sony has put *Spawn* back on schedule and it's due in late summer. What's currently known is that it features Spawn in a *Tomb Raider*-type adventure with lots of hand-to-hand combat. We'll give you the full skinny once more information becomes available.

FANTASTIC FOUR BOMBARDS PLAYSTATION

Acclaim is working on a video game version of Marvel's Fantastic Four, available for the PlayStation. The early word is that it's a side-scrolling adventure. (Gee. A side-scroller from Acclaim. How odd.) The folks at Acclaim are keeping mum about this one, but we'll keep you posted.

SEGA GENESIS MAKES AN EXODUS

Funeral music, please…there's some sad news in video game land. The Sega Genesis is defunct. Sniff. There are no plans for any future games, and all Genesis games currently in production have been canceled. *X-Women*, a game involving the female characters from Marvel's popular X-Men team, has been officially buried and will never be released. Sniff. Sniff. *Wizard* mourns the loss of the Genesis, a system that paved the way for video game re-acceptance.

THE TOY CHEST BY SCOTT BEATTY

KISS THIS!

This June, **McFarlane Toys** picks up the ball from the defunct Mego Corp. by serving up fantastic action figures based on the hard rock heroes **KISS**—the first such offerings in nearly 20 years! With the original KISS members reunited and touring in their trademark Kabuki makeup, the band's merchandise is hotter than ever. Heck, there's even a Saturday morning animated series in the works for 1998...parents, be afraid! So it's no surprise Todd McFarlane has wooed the original glam rockers to join his lineup at McFarlane Toys with an all-new 6 1/2-inch action figure lineup that includes frontman **Paul Stanley** with shooting-star missile launcher/guitar ("Love Gun"?!?), snap-on blades and armor; drummer **Peter Criss** with drum/missile launcher, drumstick weapons and snap-on armor; guitarist **Ace Frehley** with snap-on space armor and a guitar that transforms into a space sled; and infamous bassist **Gene Simmons** with ax bass, winged snake, battle staff, bat wing cape and snap-on armor. Best of all, each figure has authentic KISS black-and-white make-up deco, platform boots and real rooted hair and comes equipped with a letter-base to form the band's name when you collect all four figures! Groupies, unfortunately, are not included.

MORE STAR WARS FIGURES!

First reported on back in *Wizard* #69's International Toy Fair edition of "Toy Chest," the following **Power of the Force** action figures are more of Kenner's mammoth Star Wars lineup for the rest of this year! And yes, the bounty hunter **4-LOM** is correctly named for the first time. Kenner's original offering from the '80s was mistakenly dubbed Zuckuss...that other bug-eyed bounty hunter from "The Empire Strikes Back"!

Electronic Power F/X Emperor Palpatine

Dengar

Walrusman (Ponda Baba)

4-LOM

Blockade Runner Trooper

NEW 12-INCH STAR WARS EXCLUSIVES

Hasbro New Ventures continues its impressive run of large-size Star Wars action figures with several new exclusives slated for this year. First up is a two-pack featuring **Han Solo and Luke Skywalker in Stormtrooper Disguises**, a Kay-Bee exclusive offering. Packaged with removable helmets, two blasters (one standard Stormtrooper blaster, the other a long rifle) and an Imperial "Mouse Droid," Han and Luke blast their way onto Kay-Bee shelves this June.

In late September/early October, Target stores will offer one of Hasbro New Ventures' niftiest releases to date: the **Wampa and Luke Skywalker in Hoth Gear** two-pack, re-creating the fearsome Hoth creature from "The Empire Strikes Back" alongside his almost-lunch. The Wampa, scaled up to 14-inches, has fur and nicely sculpted claws, horns and fangs. Luke arrives snug as a bug in his Hoth parka, with blaster and lightsaber accessories.

Later in October, a variety of different regional accounts will offer up a 12-inch exclusive **Tatooine Stormtrooper**, just like Hasbro New Ventures' standard 'Trooper, except this guy's outfitted for desert warfare with a new blaster, backpack, shoulder pad and a keen "sandy" overspray deco.

And finally, roundabout Christmas 1997, FAO Schwarz serves up its own Star Wars two-pack with **Luke Skywalker in Jedi Knight Outfit and Bib Fortuna**. Luke arrives with his spiffy black Jedi cloak and green lightsaber, while Jabba the Hutt's right-hand...uh...whatever...comes sporting just his standard outfit and them tentacle-thingies growin' outta the back of his head.

Suggested retail prices for all of the Hasbro New Ventures exclusives are subject to their respective retailers.

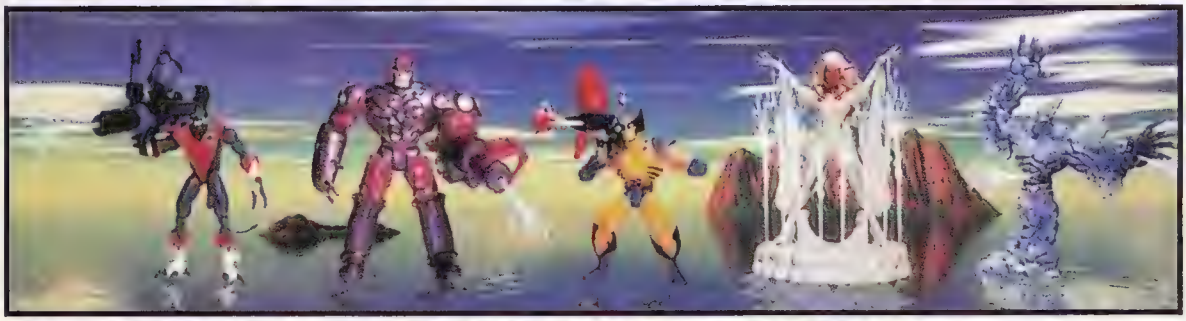
Han (left) and Luke in Stormtrooper Disguise

TOY BIZ'NESS

That nasty symbiote Venom returns this May with Toy Biz's scary **Venom: Along Came a Spider...**assortment, a line of 6-inch action figures teaming various symbiote nasties with deluxe action spiders that actually attach to the figures. Included are **Phage** and Pincer the Spider with Clip Claw and Leg Gripping Action, the **Bride of Venom** and Vile the Spider with Snap Attack Legs, Spider-Carnage and Spit the Spider with Snap Attack Legs and, of course, Venom the Symbiote and Ripper the Spider with Lashing Spider Legs.

On the shelves in June from the mighty maker of Marvel Comics action figures is the latest in a line of Toy Biz offerings engineered for water-based play. **X-Men: Water Wars** joins the recent Spider-Man: Web Splashers as a series that's just as great on dry land as it is in the bath tub or kiddy pool. Check out nifty new versions of

From left: Phage (w/ Pincer the Spider), The Bride of Venom (w/ Vile the Spider), Spider-Carnage (w/ Spit the Spider) and Venom the Symbiote (w/ Ripper the Spider)



From left: Aqua Attack Nightcrawler (w/ Water Blast Crossbow), Sentinel Test Robot (w/ Water Jet Cannon), Hydro Blast Wolverine (w/ Mutant Water Blaster), Weather Fury Storm (w/ Water Spraying Thunder Cloud) and Ultimate Iceman (w/ Wet Jet Arm Blaster)

From top left: Tarantula (w/ Transforming Tarantula Armor), Cybersect Spider-Man (w/ Transforming Cyber Spider)
From above left: Beetle (w/ Transforming Beetle Armor), Wasp, (w/ Transforming Wasp Armor) and Swarm (w/ Transforming Bee Armor)

several core mutants in the lineup, including Aqua Attack Nightcrawler (w/ Water Blast Crossbow), Hydro Blast Wolverine w/ Mutant Water Blaster (perhaps the best representation of Logan to date!), Weather Fury Storm with Water Spraying Thunder Cloud, Ultimate Iceman with Wet Jet Arm Blaster and a Sentinel Test Robot with Water Jet Cannon to give the team a good soaking (ahem...sorry).

In July, Toy Biz heads to the Savage Land to render its first-ever action figure based on macho himbo **Ka-Zar**! The 5-inch Ka-Zar comes with Jumping Zabu Tiger (natch!) and leads the **X-Men: Savage Land** lineup that includes Magneto (rendered in his current Joseph incarnation) with Water Spitting Amphibius, Savage Wolverine with Jaw-Chomping Crawler-Rex, Angel (Caucasian-skinned with real wings!) with Wing Flapping Sauron-Dino and a sexy Savage Storm with Head Ramming Colossus Dino. So that makes one saber-toothed tiger, one baby T-Rex, two Savage Land Mutates and one weird steel-plated amalgam dino...so move over "Lost World"!

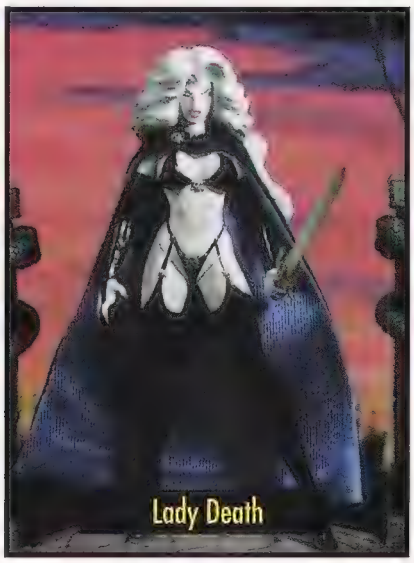
Meanwhile, back in the Big Apple, Spider-Man returns in the new Toy Biz **Spider Force** assortment, 5-inch action figures with transforming insect armor that actually "morphs" into insect sidekicks. Cybersect Spider-Man with Transforming Cyber-Spider heads up the lineup which also includes the **Wasp** with Transforming Wasp Armor and the first-ever action figures of fan-fave Spidey-foes **Tarantula**, **Beetle** and **Swarm**, each with Transforming Insect Armor.

From top left: Angel (w/ Wing Flapping Sauron-Dino), Ka-Zar (w/ Jumping Zabu Tiger), Storm (w/ Head Ramming Colossus Dino)
From above left: Wolverine (w/ Jaw Chomping Crawler-Rex) and Magneto (w/ Water Spitting Amphibius)

FIRST LOOK AT PURGATORI!

Ace sculptor Clayburn Moore serves up this sneak peek at Purgatori, the latest Chaos! Comics character to be sculpted as Moore Action Collectibles gears up for its massive action figure launch! Purgatori joins the completed Lady Death (seen here in her final provocative form) and Evil Ernie and Chastity (works in progress) as M.A.C. readies for July shipping of its first figures. For more info on M.A.C., just check out the website at **http://www.moorecreations.com/mac.htm** or e-mail Clay and the crew at **mac@moorecreations.com**.

Purgatori


Lady Death

SHI

Crusade Entertainment joins the pack of fledgling toy producers with an action figure based on Billy Tucci's bad girl sensation **Shi**! Slated for an August/September release, Shi is 8-inches tall and is articulated at the neck and arms. With accessory weapons and a sculpted rock garden base, Shi promises to be one of a projected larger line, with fellow Crusade heroine **Tomoe** planned for action figure rendering, as well as three more figures with greater articulation eyed for spring 1998. An all-white Shi variant is also in the works. Finally, Crusade notes that Shi will be released through Crusade Japan in Japanese packaging, if you're gunnin' for the foreign language card.

NOTE: The Shi prototype pictured here is in the early stages of production. The final figure will have longer hair and thinner eyebrows.

Shi Prototype

MEN IN BLACK

Galoob is all set to release its **Men in Black** action figures to coincide with the premiere of the July 2 theatrical film teaming Tommy Lee Jones and Will Smith as a pair of shadowy agents policing Earth's alien visitors. While the Men in Black toys—with sculpted poses and less articulation—may resemble more diorama than true action figures, each offering includes some nifty alien transformation mechanism or pop-up feature. Look for Slime-Fightin' Kay, Alien-Ambush Jay, Alien-Attack Edgar, Street-Striker Kay and Flame-Blastin' Jay in the regular action figure assortment. Deluxe figures will include Mikey (NOT the li'l guy on the Life cereal commercials), Body-Slam Jay and Jeebs. The Ultra Alien features Alien Terrorist Edgar and Kay in some nifty stomach-sliming action. While the Zap-Em Van slams alien bad-guy Edgar through the windshield and arrives with a removable alien spaceship.

Jeebs

SPAWN: SERIES 8 UPDATE

McFarlane Toys Collector's Club Director Chet Jacques informed "Toy Chest" that **Spawn Series 8** action figure Buffalo, shipping now, will henceforth be officially called **Sabre**. Get it? Buffalo…Sabre. Buffalo Sabres. That's Todd McFarlane's love of hockey showing through in his toys. Where the NHL is concerned, however, it's purely coincidental.

In addition, die-hard collectors take note: Spawn Series 8's **Grave Digger** figure comes with five articulated, bendy beasties arriving in five different colors, each with five different heads. Now, given that all five beasties were produced in all five colors, if you do the math just right, it adds up to a possible 25 different carded variations! Sweet petunia! If that doesn't drive completists eight ways of crazy, nothing will.

The Series 8 **Renegade** figure, fans will note, comes *au naturel*, sans underwear (don't ask how we know). Yup. He's just wearing a loincloth and a smile. Meanwhile, **Rotarr** sports McFarlane Toys' first articulated fingers (which should lend itself to some nifty poses). **Curse of the Spawn** and **Gate Keeper** round out the assortment, which arrives on new blue cards with "Ages 13-up" replacing the former "Ages 5-up" to reflect the darker tone of Spawn seen on HBO's animated series and this summer's feature film debut for ol' Spawny-Guy. **W**

ToyFare editor Scott Beatty is hoping McFarlane Toys will serve up some Cheap Trick action figures, including drummer Bun. E. Carlos with real rooted-hair comb-over bald-spot!

WISH LIST

THE 10 FIGURE THAT WIZARDS WANTS TO SEE MADE

1) Amalgam (DC/Marvel Heroes)
Kenner and Toy Biz, listen up! Fans are dying to see action figures based on wacky DC/Marvel Amalgams like Super Soldier, Dark Claw, Dr. Strangefate, Iron Lantern, Thorion and Bat Thing! Now hop to it!

2) "New" X-Men Boxed Set (X-Men)
This retro-boxed set of international X-Men would include the entire new team which debuted in *Giant Size X-Men #1*: Sunfire, Banshee, Nightcrawler, Thunderbird, Storm and Colossus.

3) Darth Vader w/ Removable Helmet (Star Wars)
Luke Skywalker's daddy would come with his trusty red lightsaber and a removable helmet to reveal the scarred kisser of Anakin Skywalker beneath!

4) Gen[13] (WildStorm)
Follow the bouncing ball: Freefall with punk-rocker outfit change (hubba!), Fairchild w/ breakaway student clothes (double hubba!), Rainmaker w/ light-up eyes and snap-on energy bolts (hubba! hubba! hubba!), Burnout w/ light-up hands and light-up, snap-on flame bolts, and Grunge w/ interchangeable "absorbed" arms. It's a-no-brainer!

5) Wampa (Star Wars)
The abominable whatsit that tried to gnash on Luke Skywalker in "The Empire Strikes Back" would arrive in its own playset, complete with gnawed-on human skull and icicles to hang Luke from for a midnight snack!

6) "Classic" Avengers Boxed Set (Avengers: Legends of Power)
Marvel's heavy hitters would come boxed in great Jack Kirby stylings with the Hulk, Iron Man, Thor, and Wasp and Ant-Man scaled to itty-bitty size!

7) Blink (X-Men)
This "Age of Apocalypse" poster-girl would come with sparkling "teleport" portals and removable energy javelins.

8) X-Man (X-Men)
C'mon Toy Biz — this is the Cable "variant" fans really wanna see! Just make this alternate future Nate Grey with snap-on TK blasts and we can all call it a day.

9) Nightwing (Total Justice)
The all-grown-up Dick Grayson would come with Batarangs, truncheon sticks and a retractable jump-line for "roof-hoppin' action!

10) Captain Marvel (Total Justice)
The World's Mightiest Mortal is prime real estate for Total Justice. Just give him snap-on mystic lightning bolts and maybe a cooler-than-cool "Shazam!" voice chip!

Hey! Keep sending them Top 10 lists! You've already made a difference! Drop us a note with your "dream figures" at:

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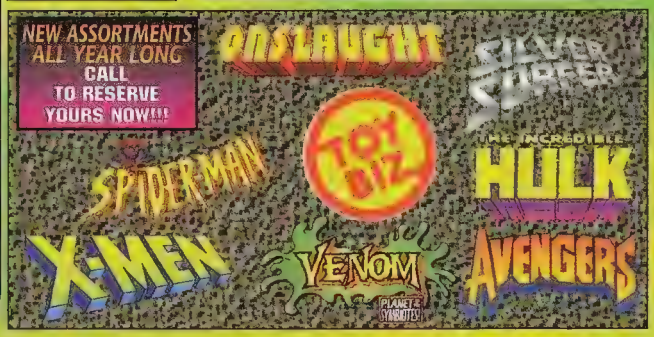

The Sleepwalking "You Do Voodoo" contest

What's that, you say? You've always wanted to practice witchcraft and do some voodoo? Well, lucky for you, Hall of Heroes wants to finally grant you the chance to spin a little magic! Its new, hit horror comic *Sleepwalking* is just packed to the rim with creepies, crawlies, ghosts and ghoulies of every kind . . . but it's a little short in one category—witch doctors! Think your magic can help?

How to cast a spell:

Just pick up your pencils, pens, crayons, or magic wands and design and draw your very own voodoo witch doctor! It's that easy! It's that fun! It's that . . . uh, spooky! And here's the horrific part—the best entries win oodles of *Sleepwalking* tricks and treats!

Grand Prize (1): One lucky winner will have his or her voodoo witch doctor appear in an issue of *Sleepwalking*. The winner will also receive an original page of *Sleepwalking* artwork, one copy of *Sleepwalking* signed by Kelley Jones, Jerry Beck and Jerry Kennedy, a *Sleepwalking* double-sided jumbo print T-shirt and a *Sleepwalking* embroidered hat! Whew!

First Prize (10): Ten winners will each receive a special limited edition *Sleepwalking* ashcan signed by Kelley Jones, Jerry Beck and Jerry Kennedy.

Second Prize (20): Twenty winners will each receive a copy of *Sleepwalking* signed by Kelley Jones, Jerry Beck and Jerry Kennedy.

Fill this sucker out, attach your entry, put it in an envelope and send it to:
Sleepwalking Contest, c/o Wizard Press,
P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Deadline is July 31, 1997.

This contest is sponsored by Hall of Heroes, who never sleep on the job.

Tiring Legal Matters

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Hall of Heroes, their immediate families and anybody who thinks biting the heads off chickens and drawing inverted crosses with blood is weird. What's your problem? Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card and attach to original drawing. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: Sleepwalking Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. I know how to put the hoodoo in voodoo like you do. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. Think the guy who created Brother Voodoo is bitter that stuff like the Jericho Drumm merchandise craze hasn't kicked in yet? All entries must be received at contest headquarters by July 31, 1997. Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected based on originality and creativity from among all properly completed entries by Wizard Press. Drawing will take place on August 15, 1997. Grand Prize winner will be required to sign agreement stating Hall of Heroes has rights to the winner's character.

For a list of winners, available after August 15, 1997, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Sleepwalking Contest Winners, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

"You Do Voodoo" Entry Form

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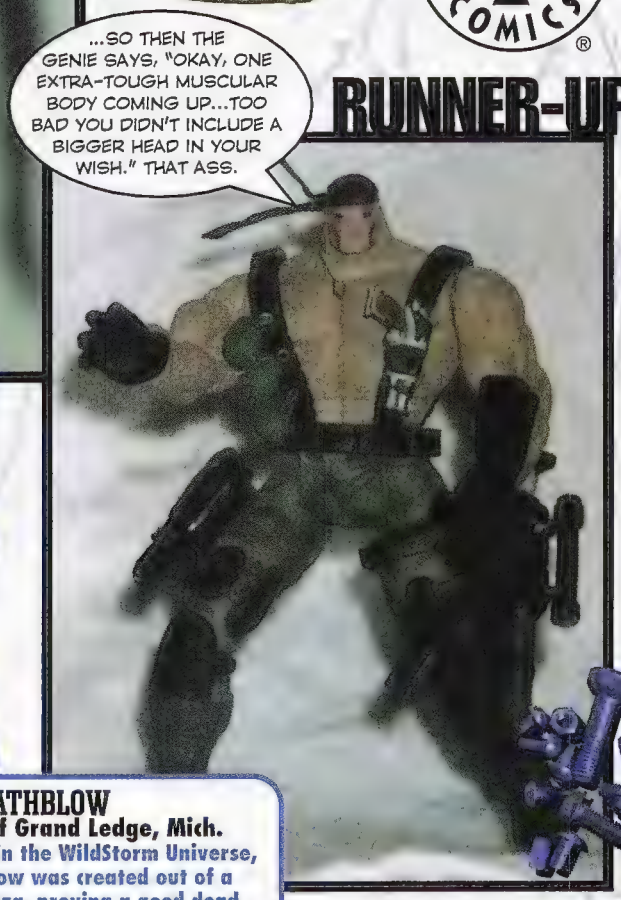
GRAND PRIZE

THE HANGED MAN
Paul Saint-Laurent of Kitchener, Ontario, Canada
Now, this may just be a repaint of a Toy Biz Anti-Symbiote Spidey, but it's so darn cool-looking, don't ya think? There's no doubt that this figure would make Astro City creator Kurt Busiek proud.

All of the displayed figures were made from plain old, ordinary figures and household materials, and each of the truly talented creators will receive an *X-Files* novel. The Runner-Up will receive the novel plus an *X-Files* comic signed by Jon Van Fleet, and the Grand Prize Winner flies away with all those goodies plus a Flukeman statue! Outstanding work, folks!

Thanks a ton to the people at Dark Horse for the way-cool Flukeman prize, and to Jon for signing the comics!

RUNNER-UP



DEATHBLOW
Chad Marek of Grand Ledge, Mich.
He may have died in the WildStorm Universe, but this Deathblow was created out of a WetWorks Mendoza, proving a good dead man rarely stays down.

MUTANT GANG LEADER

(from *The Dark Knight Returns*)

Paul Herwick of Climax, N.Y.

Taking a Toy Biz Carnage head, a Mattel He-Man's torso and arms, a Toy Biz Squirting Venom's legs, Punisher's gun, Krule's feet, Mattel's Aladdin Genie's fire and pencil points for spikes, Paul seems to have put as much thought into this figure as Frank Miller put into the storyline for *The Dark Knight Returns*.

BRUCE WAYNE

Bob Kensinger of Canton, N.C.

With a briefcase from a COPS figure in the hands of a repainted "Batman: The Animated Series" Two-Face figure, Bruce Wayne looks ever the corporate tycoon.

ZAN & JAYNA

(The Wonder-Twins from "Super Friends")

Oliver Yambao of San Diego, Calif.

Wonder-Twin powers activate! Shape of a Toy Biz Angel repaint for Zan and form of a Toy Biz Spider-Woman repaint for Jayna. Man, didn't "Super Friends" just rule?!?

THE DEMON

John-Paul Layedra of Elmhurst, N.Y.

This Demon figure was melded together from a Weapon X body and legs, Klingon Warrior Worf arms, a Gargoyles Lexington head and a faded old T-shirt from John-Paul's closet (and boy, did that shirt have a demonic smell).

HEY!

If you're interested in entering the homemade figure contest, send well-lit, clear, color photographs (No Polaroids, and put 'em in a cool or funny pose!), along with your name, address, description of how you created your figure, and your full phone number (including area code) to:

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A Strange Story of Secrets

Bizarre mysteries fill the surreal realm of Gary Spencer Millidge's *Strangehaven*

Talk to your typical self-publisher for a few minutes, and he'll probably tell you how much trouble it is to put out your own comic. Not so for Gary Spencer Millidge, creator and publisher of *Strangehaven*. He actually likes all the grunt work involved in self-publishing.

"I enjoy all aspects of it," the British artist/writer claims. "I enjoy keeping in contact with people in the industry, dealing with the printers and packing parcels up. It's fun making decisions and watching them come off. Possibly I would get bored if I was just sitting down drawing. It's the variety that actually attracts me."

Variety is also the key word when it comes to describing Millidge's *Strangehaven*, a bizarre soap opera set in a remote English village with a cast of unusual characters, each with his or her own secret. Many have compared the comic to David Lynch's cult TV series "Twin Peaks" because of the strange goings-on in the village (including a secret underground society akin to the Freemasons, Amazonian shamans and talking animals), but Millidge takes extra care to make sure his comic doesn't veer too much into the realm of the fantastic.

One of the ways in which Millidge keeps *Strangehaven* grounded is through his photo-realistic artwork. Before the first issue of *Strangehaven* hit the stands in the summer of 1995, Millidge conceived the story as being done in a loose, almost impressionistic style. But when it came time to put pen to paper, he fell back on what he learned in art school. "My natural tendency is to put a lot of detail into stuff, and I like to get my facts right, whether it's in the illustration or the story. When I actually sat down to start it, I naturally drew realistically when I got all the reference together. I just did a complete about-turn and decided to go whole-hog and base it on lots of reference photographs and made sure I got everything right."

Millidge estimates it takes 12 to 18 hours to complete a page of his comic, with all of the intricate photo references he has to assemble. Why would someone put such an insane amount of time into a comic book page? For Millidge, the answer is quite simple. "I wanted to play to my strengths," he explains. "At the time it might have made more commercial sense to do a superhero comic or a Bad Girl comic, but my strengths lie in more realistic illustration. I wanted to make *Strangehaven* as good as I could possibly make it. It just seemed like the right thing to do at the time."

For every issue of *Strangehaven*, Millidge must assemble his cast of characters, based mostly on friends and family, for photo shoots. Naturally, he gets quite a few offers from people who want to be in his comic. "When they ask, they tend to want to write their own characters as well. 'Hey, can I be in your comic and can I be an ex-rock 'n' roll star with a drinking problem?' They start writing my plots for me!"

His friends did serve as part of Millidge's inspiration for *Strangehaven*'s characters, however. Alex Hunter, the main charac-

The cover to *Strangehaven* #7

by tom palmer jr.

ter, stumbles upon the village of Strangehaven when he gets lost and smashes his car into a tree. Millidge and a few friends had a similar experience while driving through the English countryside, although without running into any of the local flora. "We kept going around and around, coming back to the same crossroads and going past the same places. Eventually we came over this hill and came face to face with this beautiful little secluded village. I modeled Strangehaven after it. I've put some landmarks from the village in, as well as a few of my favorite shops and buildings, so I've got the best of both worlds."

Millidge has taken the germ of an idea he had on his outing with his friends and expanded it into a rich comic book experience. *Strangehaven* will stick in your mind after you read just one issue, because the characters are so vividly portrayed. Not only do they look real, but they sound and act real as well. Millidge also has a knack for setting a scene by carefully choosing background elements, like time of day and camera angles, that other comic creators might take for granted.

Despite all of the advantages of planning ahead, Millidge realizes there is the possibility of losing interest when it comes time to sling ink. "My problem with my past projects is that I've planned them out too much and got bored with them, which is why there's so many plotlines going on in *Strangehaven*. Although I've got it roughly planned out, I like to allow myself plenty of chances to make last-minute decisions to lighten things up or add a little bit of drama to it. There's usually something that pops in at the last minute."

Millidge's top priority is to get as many people as possible reading *Strangehaven*. "I'd like to think my comic is easy to follow," he explains. "I'd also like to think it's accessible to people who don't normally read comics, and hopefully I've done my bit to bring new people into reading and buying comics." W

Tom Palmer Jr.'s turn-ons are chocolate and fuzzy slippers. His turn-offs are rainy days and noisy people. Hee-hee.

A scene from *Strangehaven* #2 that introduces its unusual residents

FYI

Six issues of *Strangehaven* are available at your local comic store. If you can't find a copy, you can contact Millidge's American agent, Chris Staros (publisher of the highly recommended *Staros Report*, a resource guide for small press comics) at P.O. Box 1282, Marietta, GA 30061-1282. Single issues through mail-order are $3.50 and six-issue subscriptions are $20.

Strangehaven #7 will be shipping in June and #8 should be out in August. In June, Millidge will be releasing a "*Strangehaven* Starter Pack," which consists of issues #1-#4, plus a signed and numbered print.

Gary Spencer Millidge's Recommended Reading

"I'm incredibly impressed by what David Lapham is doing with *Stray Bullets*. *Eightball* gets better and better with every issue. I also think Charles Burns' *Black Hole* is very good. As far as British comics go, I'd have to recommend *Sleaze Castle*. It's chock full of references to this, that and the other, and it's a really dense read."

Recommended Reading

Brilliant Boy Brothers Tim and David Dang have a delightful little comic on their hands. With their slick cartooning style and fun stories, these brothers will have you clamoring for more adventures of Gill (a.k.a. Brilliant Boy) and his adorable little pals. Write to Circus Comics, P.O. Box 45523, 747 Don Mills Rd., Don Mills, Ontario, Canada M3C 3S4. The first, extra-sized issue is $2.95 and regular issues are $2.50 (plus $1 per issue for postage). Subscriptions will set you back $15 for six issues.

A Jew in Communist Prague Italian comics master Vittorio Giardino, with his perfectly rendered artwork and laid-back storytelling, makes it all look so easy. In "Loss of Innocence," the first part of this ambitious graphic novel series, Giardino tells the story of Jonas Finkel, a young Jewish boy in communist Czechoslovakia. Finkel finds himself the victim of racism and bureaucracy after his father is mysteriously imprisoned. This is an important comic that deserves to be read and examined. If you can't find this at your local comic store or bookstore, write to NBM Publishing, 185 Madison Ave., Ste. 1504, New York, NY 10016, for a free catalog.

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THE SKINNY

Comic book REVIEWS from the *Wizard* Editors

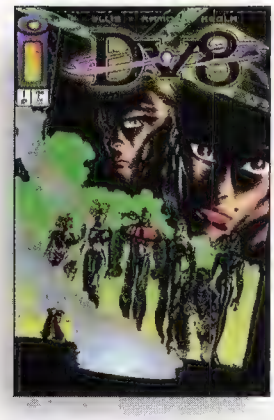
THE SCORING

6 THE BEST | 5 EXCELLENT | 4 GOOD | 3 SO-SO | 2 UGH | 1 CRAPOLA

DV8

There's a reason deviants are shunned

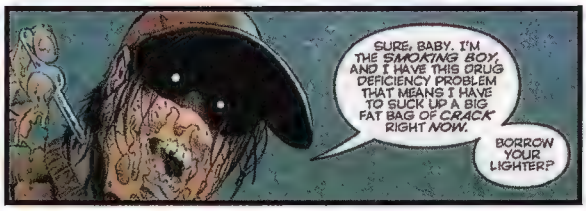
Issues Reviewed: #1-#5
Genre: Adult superhero action/adventure
Publisher: Image Comics
Creative team: Warren Ellis, Humberto Ramos and Sal Regla
Price/Frequency: $2.50/Monthly



What You Need to Know: Former I/O (International Operations) government operative Ivana Baiul is on the run from I/O. Baiul has stolen a bunch of superpowered kids from I/O's "Project: Genesis" to be her team of "Deviants," who go off on missions for her.

The Good: The stories are so bizarre they're completely unpredictable. In one issue, Ivana sends out the Deviants to recruit a bunch of renegade Gen-Active teens, but the people they find are so repulsive and unscrupulous, the team kills them instead. This offbeat nature keeps a reader on his toes.

The dialogue is hip and cutting edge, and seems appropriate for these misfit characters.



The Bad: All of the characters in this title are extremely unlikable and eminently forgettable. The team is morally corrupt, to the point that they are not heroes, but villains. They care nothing for human life, and many innocents are killed during their adventures. Plus, they spend so much of their time talking about intra-team sexual activity and engaging in drug use, that it's more prominent than any sort of "adventures" they have. Even worse, the scenes of drug use and sex have no impact on the stories—they're added to establish a dark mood that further makes the characters unlikable.

Besides their obvious vices, little is done to flesh out who these characters are, or to establish what powers they possess. Little is given by way of background in the first issue (including their origin), so you don't understand why or how any of it is happening.

Many plot threads go nowhere; when it looks like there's about to be pivotal conversation about the team's unity at the end of issue #4, #5 starts off with the team on a mission instead. And those stories with combat are one-dimensional and could've been told in a few pages.

Too many concepts in this book are so bizarre they're gratuitously repulsive. Elements like the "Smoking Boy" character in issue #2, who's so addicted to crack that he oozes a mucous-like substance, are hard to get past. There's a lot of shots of DV8's enemies being ripped apart, including a big shot of a thug looking at his chunky severed arm in #3.

The most glaring problem with the book is that Humberto Ramos' cartoony art style, while masterfully suited for the lighthearted *Impulse*, doesn't fit with these dark stories at all.

The Buzz: This book is getting a massive overhaul. The creative team will soon be Michael Heisler and J.J. Kirby and insiders at WildStorm hint that the book's tone will lighten.

The Skinny: This book is trying to be the antithesis of the lighthearted *Gen*[13] (maybe trying to ape a little of *Preacher*), and ends up being a turn-off.

Some characters are so grotesque, they are a complete turn-off

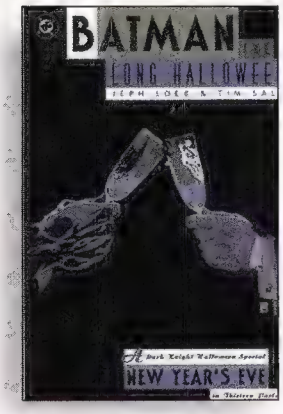
The DV8 kids are so unlikable, they are villains you don't want to root for

The Verdict: 1

BATMAN: THE LONG HALLOWEEN

This Bat-book is a real treat

Issues Reviewed: #1-#7
Genre: Superhero action/adventure
Publisher: DC Comics
Creative Team: Jeph Loeb and Tim Sale
Price/Frequency: $2.95/13-issue mini-series



What You Need to Know: This 13-part mystery takes place in the "Batman: Year One" era, where the Caped Crusader is new to the scene, Commissioner Gordon is merely a police captain, and Harvey Dent is in his pre-Two-Face days as Gotham's district attorney. Picking up after the initial "Year One" storyline (*Batman* #404-#407), a serial killer named Holiday is murdering members of Carmine "The Roman" Falcone's "family" on every major holiday. So far, Holiday has eluded authorities and he/she could be anyone in the story.

The Good: This is a wonderful, interesting mystery. From the first few pages of issue #1, readers will be instantly hooked on this series, trying to figure out Holiday's identity before Batman can. *The Long Halloween* perfectly displays Batman's core: he's a detective, a tidbit oft-neglected in his regular titles.

But what really makes this series work beyond the basic mystery, is the excellent use of its supporting cast. The story uses the "Year One" method of almost giving Batman a back seat to other players like Gordon, The Roman and Harvey Dent, who're all rich characters that are fully explored in this series. And the characterization of the pre-Two-Face Harvey Dent is great! He plays a major role in trying to catch Holiday (he could even *be* Holiday), giving him more depth.

Besides a neat supporting cast and story, this book has some of the coolest villains around. From Catwoman to Joker, Batman's Rogues Gallery is well-represented. Most welcome is the addition

of an interesting crime lord in Gotham like The Roman—a necessary yin to Batman's yang, struggling for control of "their" city.

The art also does a brilliant job of telling the story. There's a great marriage between story and art, making the book a refreshing read from start to finish.

The Bad: There are a number of occasions in the art—particularly some of the gray-toned murder scenes which can appear outta nowhere—where the story becomes confusing. Since these are key points to the mystery, these black-and-white scenes need to be transitioned more cleanly.

At $2.95 an issue (with $4.95 bookends), the series is awfully expensive—and this will undoubtedly turn off some readers. This series is so good, it doesn't need a fancy cover stock. When it's all over, DC is asking readers to shell out a whopping $42 plus change for this incredible series.

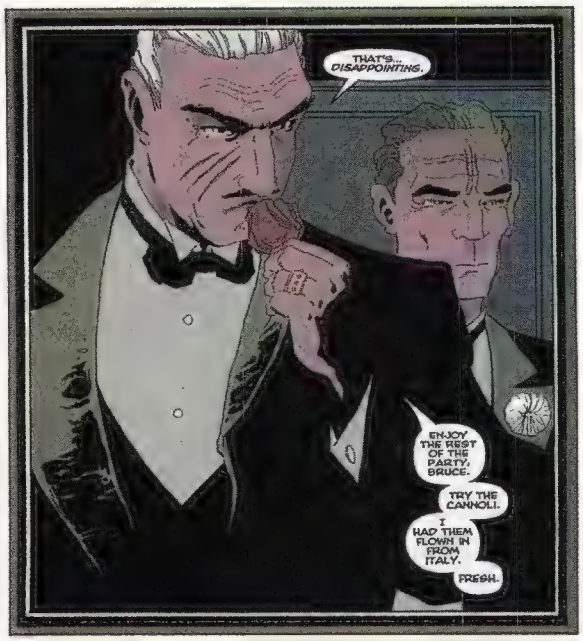
This book desperately needs a "what-happened-previously" box, bringing readers up to date on the latest murders and suspects.

The Buzz: With issue #13 a few months away, readers are gettin' itchy to see who Holiday really is. (See page 34 for the lowdown on the suspects.)

The Skinny: An excellent mystery story that makes deft use of its supporting cast, this book is top-notch. The ongoing Bat-books could stand to take a cue from *Long Halloween*.

This mystery's so good that everyone—even D.A. Harvey Dent—is a suspect

The Roman, Gotham's crimelord is a refreshing (and much-needed) element to the Bat-mythos



The Verdict: 5

SUPERGIRL

Flying short of a Super tale

Issues Reviewed: #1-#9
Genre: Superhero action/adventure
Publisher: DC Comics
Creative Team: Peter David, Gary Frank and Cam Smith
Price/Frequency: $1.95/Monthly

What You Need to Know: Now based in the small town of Leesburg, the shapeshifting synthetic being known as Supergirl has merged with the mind and body of misguided teen Linda Danvers in order to save Linda's life, losing some powers and gaining an identity and family in the process.

The Good: The art is a visual treat making adept use of storytelling techniques. Detail is given to just the right areas: When Supergirl changes from Danvers, she gets taller and her eyes, hair and figure change. Realistic elements like actually drawing Gorilla Grodd to look like a gorilla (and not a humanoid gorilla) give the book a distinctive look.

This book finally gives Supergirl a personality. Combining her with Danvers, who wasn't quite squeaky-clean, has given her an edge. She was always a little bland, and now she's got depth.

There are some neat bits in the storylines. Issue #1's Supergirl/Linda merge (which asks if Supergirl *saved* her life or stole it), Chemo's desire to be alive in #5 (and his asking for the definition of "life") and the ties that villain Buzz has to *Sandman* are all entertaining.

For new readers, there's a great "what-happened-previously" box, even if it is in the letters page and not up front. More comics could stand to take this route.

The Bad: There are a lot of little things keeping people from caring about these characters as much as they could. For one, it needs to be clear-cut what Supergirl's powers are. Readers don't find out until a few issues *into* the series that the Linda-merge has messed both Linda and Supergirl up. Also, Linda's mother is so bland as an overly dedicated Christian that it's annoying her character isn't bulked up more.

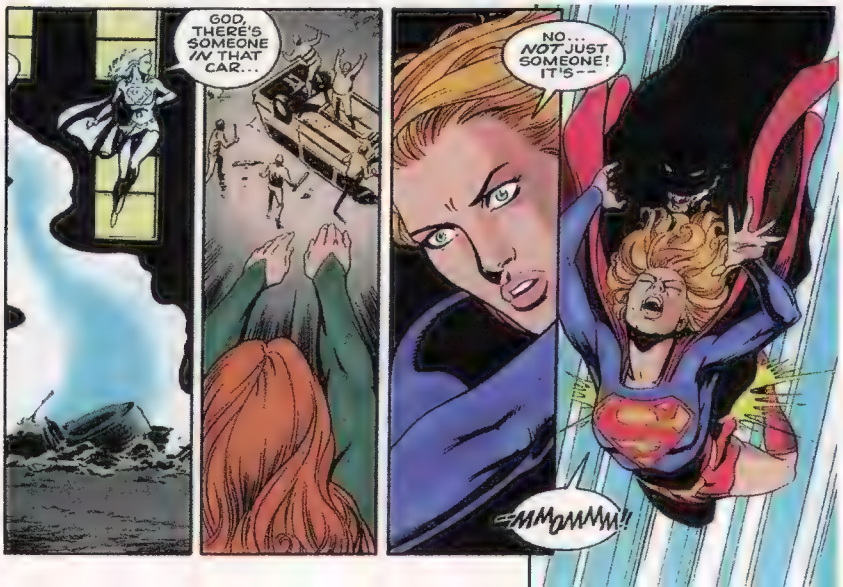
Despite the clean pacing of the art, the "origin" storyline concerning Linda's background moved at a very slow pace. It could've been told in four issues rather than nine. The best stories were the self-contained issues (Chemo in #5, Rampage in #6) that had little to do with the drawn-out origin.

Also, events are sometimes a bit too coincidental. In issue #3, Supergirl just happens to save a lady in trouble and, oh yeah, it's Linda's mom. And what was Grodd thinking choosing a blip like *Leesburg* as a base to amass power? He might've fared better to pick Cleveland or something.

The amount of supporting characters leaves little time to get background on them. And this book needs some decent villains. Let's see Supergirl get her own rogues gallery, instead of an old *Flash* villain like Grodd or *Metal Men* foil like Chemo.

The Buzz: Leonard Kirk (*Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*) has taken over the penciling with issue #10. With the heat the book's been generating, he's got big shoes to fill.

The Skinny: This book should be more exciting than it is. With an intriguing star, a wide variety of supporting characters, and a lot of potential for villains, it's just begging for smaller, faster-paced storylines to glue it all together.



Gary Frank's art is so good he can make Gorilla Grodd actually look simian

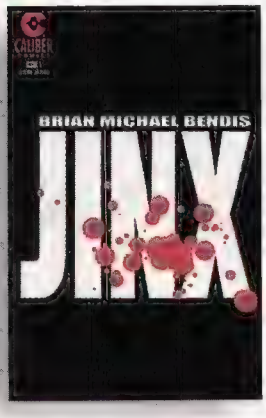
Forced coincidences like this happen often in Supergirl (but ya gotta like that art!)

The Verdict: 3

JINX

Don't bail on this book

Issues Reviewed: #1-#7
Genre: Adult crime noir
Publisher: Caliber Press
Creative Team: Brian Michael Bendis
Price/Frequency: $2.95/Monthly



What You Need to Know: Jinx Alameda is a weary bounty hunter, making money by bringing in criminals who skip bail. When she meets a nice guy named David Gold (a.k.a. Goldfish), things get pretty awkward when she finds out he's a weary criminal she feels she has to bring in.

The Good: The concept behind this series is great: A bounty hunter falls for a crook, and then learns he's on the wrong side of the law. Rather than falling into the normal clichés of this type of story—bounty hunter discovers her lover's a crook, talks him out of it and they live happily ever after—*Jinx* surprises and entertains. Besides having a great interaction between Jinx and Goldfish, including some very snappy dialogue, this book throws the immediate conflict in everyone's face, hooking a reader on the series from the first issue.

These stories have depth. The fact that Jinx and Goldfish aren't completely and openly honest with each other adds another level to the series. The situations, dialogue and characterization all work well together to create a realistic world. And there's good reason for that: Bendis did his homework and talked to a real bounty hunter, whose tales Bendis bases his stories on.

The unique art style crosses some very traditional borders by incorporating actual photos into the backgrounds of many panels. And the characters' facial expressions are priceless, instantly conveying each character's mood.

The Bad: While the art style is neat with all the photos interspersed throughout, at times it can be difficult to read. And that's due to the dominant use of heavy blacks in the series, where pages can come off quite murky. Issue #7, the big climax to the current storyline where Jinx must rescue Goldfish, was extremely hard to follow. At one point, it's hard to tell if it's Jinx or one of the crooks who gets shot.

The pacing can be a bit off, adding to the occasional confusion. The stories can get a little choppy, jumping from one point to another too quickly—particularly the unexplained "Jinx-grabbing-$20-bills" scene shown in issue #1 and again in #5, disrupting the story. Yet on the other end of the spectrum, there are places where the story takes too long to get to a certain spot (some pages will have a dozen panels of talking heads or one big panel with a dozen strung-along dialogue captions). A better mix of pacing is needed.

The Buzz: Starting in June, *Jinx* moves over to Image Comics. While the series is staying in black and white, it'll get the exposure it deserves.

The Skinny: *Jinx* is a very entertaining read, thanks to a cool concept, developed characters and great interactions between them. Unfortunately, the title is sometimes difficult to follow because of the heavy use of blacks in the art.

"IS THAT WHAT'S IN THAT LITTLE NOTEBOOK OF YOURS?"

"AS FAR AS YOU KNOW. OK, YA READY? I'LL BE DICK CAVETT. YOU BE FASCINATING."

"OOOOOH BOY. I THOUGHT I WAS BEING FASCINATING."

"WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE WORD?"

"MY FAVORITE WORD? MY FAVORITE WORD... OH!...SNUFFULUFAGUS."

"SNUFFULUFAGUS...WHY?"

"WHY? ISN'T IT OBVIOUS?"

"OK...?"

"WHAT? YOU DON'T LIKE THE WORD SNUFFULUFAGUS?"

"NO, NO, IT'S JUST THAT... THAT'S PRETTY MUCH THE STUPIDEST ANSWER I'VE EVER HEARD."

"WELL, YOU'RE NOT EXACTLY DEALING WITH BUDDHA HERE, HONEY."

"WHAT'S YOUR LEAST FAVORITE WORD?"

"LOSE."

"OOOH...WOW! MINE TOO."

Jinx has great dialogue and characters, but the art layout can slow the story's pacing

The Verdict: 4

No Board. No Boundaries. No Limits.

Express Chess is a great new card game. It springs from the traditions of chess and flows with the excitement and flexibility of cards. But, Express Chess is not a typical collectible card game:

- You can afford it—the Starter Decks are inexpensive, and each Starter includes everything that two players need for a game.
- You can complete your collection—two unique Starter Decks include every card in the set—there are no booster packs.
- You will enjoy it—the rules are easy, but the play is challenging.

Speaking of challenges, go challenge the top chess player you know to an Express Chess match. Play your right cards right, and you will win!

EXPRESS CHESS

Express Chess and Blackbox TM & © 1996 Blackbox llc. All rights reserved.

The Accolade by Edmund Blair Leighton
Credit: Bridgeman/Art Resource, NY

Neptune and a Tiriton by Gian Lorenzo Bernini
Credit: Victoria & Albert Museum, London/Art Resource, NY

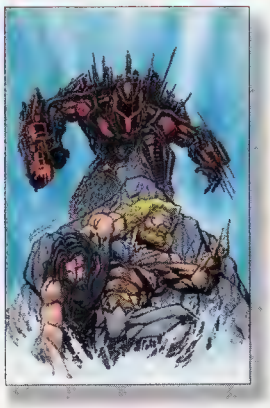
PICKS

BEHOLD!

THEY'RE MAD, I TELL YOU!

THE MUST-READ COMICS SHIPPING IN JUNE

ALPHA FLIGHT #1



AQUAMAN #35

TITLES DENOTED WITH A **MR** CONTAIN MATERIAL THAT'S SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS.

ADVENTURES IN THE DC UNIVERSE #5

DC COMICS Spotlighting J'onn J'onzz, the Oreo-chompin' Martian Manhunter, this ish sees a UFO drop in over Denver, Colo., and...waitaminute. Can we please have one Martian Manhunter story that DOESN'T revolve around alien invasions? Geez, let's see J'onn fight Kiteman or something. By Steve Vance, John Delaney and Ron Boyd. **$1.75**

ALPHA FLIGHT #1

MARVEL Forget WildC.A.T.s. Forget Youngblood. The team that gave a job to the original midget superhero is back! Alpha Flight, Canada's version of the Avengers, is all set to kick butt with old members Vindicator and Puck (the aforementioned midget), newbies Murmur, Radius and Flex, and two guys calling themselves Guardian and Sasquatch, though they ain't exactly like you remember 'em. But what's the hidden agenda of Alpha Flight's bosses at Dept. H? Whadda they have planned for Alpha Flight? And why's Northstar hanging around a junior high school in a towel? By Steven T. Seagle and Scott Clark. **$2.99**

AQUAMAN #35

DC COMICS Man, first Swamp Thing shows up and slaps around our boy Artie, and now another obscure Vertigo guy with a canceled book, Animal Man, makes a guest shot. Why? Heck, 'cause Gamesman, a hunter without equal, is after him and only Aquaman, blinded from last issue's tussle with Triton, can help. Hmm... a one-handed blind guy. Our money's on Gamesman. By Peter David, Jim Calafiore and Peter Palmiotti. **$1.75**

ASTRO CITY #10

IMAGE He may be old and have difficulty eating solids, but the Junkman's not one to be pushed aside. He's been busy planning the biggest heist in the history of Astro City, and guess what? He pulls it off. Yep, right under every hero's nose, the Junkman emerges victorious. Then why's everything seem so wrong? By Kurt Busiek, Brent Anderson and Will Blyberg. Busiek says, "The Junkman's a criminal that wouldn't be out of place fighting Batman or Spider-Man. He's not a world conquering villain, he's the kind that robs banks. He wants to Show Them All. But if he pulls his perfect crime off, he'll be rich for the rest of his life but nobody'll know he did it. He'd win, but he didn't Show Them All." **$2.50**

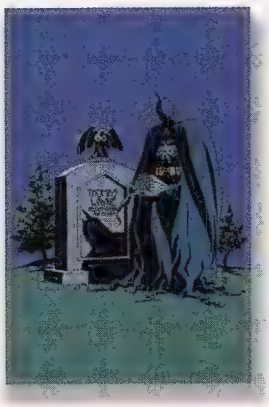
BATMAN: THE LONG HALLOWEEN #9 (OF 13)

DC COMICS Father's Day rolls around and Bruce Wayne is taken before a grand jury for being the serial killer Holiday. Besides worrying about that, ol' Brucie's still trying to find Holiday himself. Plus, Scarecrow and the Mad Hatter are back in Gotham, teaming up with Carmine Falcone, one of Gotham's underworld bosses. By Jeph Loeb and Tim Sale. **$2.95**

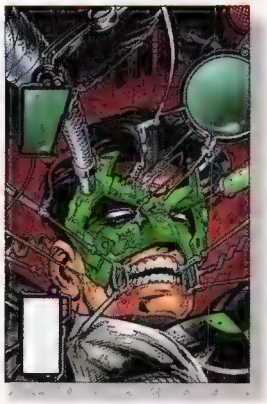
BRAINBANX #6 (OF 6)

HELIX/DC Thanks to Anna, the telepath who can carry another consciousness in her mind, everything that ORC (that crazy research place that put human brains in sheep—yeah, *real* brilliant) has done

ASTRO CITY #10



BATMAN: THE LONG HALLOWEEN #9



GREEN LANTERN #89

HEPCATS #7

is gonna be revealed–like why they chose sheep to put human brains in instead of say…humans? And now that her job's done, what's she gonna do with the guy she's been dragging along in her head? By Elaine Lee and Temujin. **$2.50**

THE FLASH #128

DC COMICS After kicking out the Flash, blaming him for all the supervillain activity, Keystone City is turned into a war zone as the Flash's Rogues Gallery (Weather Wizard, Capt. Cold, Heatwave, Mirror Master and Capt. Boomerang) returns from the dead. So when you're superhero-less and under supervillain attack, who d'ya call? That's right…the JLA! Whoo-hoo! By Mark Waid, Brian Augustyn, Paul Ryan and John Nyberg. **$1.75**

GEN[13] #20

IMAGE Okay, Fairchild, Freefall and Grunge have been captured by aliens. On the ship, Grunge contracts some strange alien virus and turns into some weird alien thingy. So Freefall and Fairchild have to find a cure. Meanwhile, there's another weird alien thingy wreaking havoc on the spaceship. That, and it's reeeeal cold in space, so the pictures of the Gen[13] women should be fun to look at. By Brandon Choi, J. Scott Campbell and Alex Garner. **$2.50**

GENERATION X #29

MARVEL Skin's chillin' in his 'hood with his homeys. But his former gang's waitin' to bust a cap in him and the other Gen Xers. Before that goes down, the Man sends in the Sentinels. Now the Xers are trapped. They can't fight the Sentinels without riskin' Skin's family, but they can't let themselves be taken either. Yep, mutants are a Menace to Society! By James Robinson and Chris Bachalo. Robinson says, "It's the first of a three parter that chronicles the team's experience in Los Angeles prowling the Venice Beach area as they're pursued by Sentinels. They'll be attempting, in their own semi-trained way, to function as a team. Plus, we'll get to meet Skin's cousin who possibly has one of the oddest mutant powers so far." **$1.99**

GREEN LANTERN #89

DC COMICS Kyle's up against a computer that wants to free all other computers from humanity's slavery. Hey, sounds kinda like the "Terminator" plots. Maybe we'll get to see Arnie's naked butt again. (NOTE: You can see li'l Arnold in the "The Terminator" when he initially shows up from the future.) Anyway, GL's gotta find a way to defeat the ultimate in logical machines. By Ron Marz, Darryl Banks and Terry Austin. **$1.75**

HELLBOY: ALMOST COLOSSUS #1 (OF 2)

LEGEND/DARK HORSE When a friend's life is in danger, it's up to Hellboy to help. First he's gotta track down something called the Czege homunculus (pronounced "Dave"). The Czege is a 500-year-old artificial man who can (hopefully) answer all of Hellboy's questions…especially why he's named Czege. Plus, Hellboy'll also hit a desecrated cemetery and some haunted ruins. Ooooh! By Mike Mignola. **$2.95**

HEPCATS #7

ANTARCTIC PRESS Arnie, Erica and some friends went to do some Christmas shopping in the mall. Suddenly Erica passed out after seein' some strange guy, who took her outside. There, Arnie found them and got the crap kicked outta him. Now, this guy shows up at Erica's apartment…and only Erica knows who he is or what he wants. Also this month, check out the special *Hepcats Tenth Anniversary Special* showing how this animal headed group got its start. Both swell books are done by Martin Wagner. **$2.95—REGULAR; $4.95—SPECIAL**

HITMAN #17

DC COMICS "Ace of Killers," Part 3 (of 6). Tommy, Natt the Hat and the Cat (Catwoman…mmmm) are doin' their darndest not to get caught and killed by the Mawzir, that evil demon who's huntin' down Tommy. Luckily, Tommy's got another plan. He's enlisted the aid of Etrigan the Demon, hoping *he* can do something about the Arkannone, the group that controls the Mawzir. This is a special "easy jumping on point for new readers" issue. Yup. By Garth Ennis and John McCrea. **$2.25**

READ THIS BOOK!

SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE #53

VERTIGO/DC Everyone's captivated by this newfangled invention called the radio. (It's like TV, *without* the pictures. Get it?) The serial dramas (what we'd call soap operas) are the biggest thing to hit the airwaves. But *these* serial dramas have a twist. Seems the real cast members are mixed up in some weird stuff, 'cause they keep on dying. We smell a mystery! By Steven T. Seagle and Guy Davis. Seagle says, "This story deals with how people in Manhattan were kind of pulled in by radio when it was becoming the big form of entertainment. Of course, somebody is killing some of the popular radio personalities, because this is *Sandman Mystery Theatre* and somebody's gotta bite it. It kind of becomes this play between the written word and the spoken word because there are some literary clues left at the crime scenes." **MR $2.50**

IMPULSE #28

DC COMICS Ever hear of Miss Arrowette? Neither did we or else we'd have put her in the "Mort of the Month." Well, she's some would-be heroine who wants her daughter to be the next Arrowette. Of course they choose the hometown of Impulse to make her big debut. Mmmm, we can buy ONE superhero down in the deep South, but two…? C'mon. By Tom Peyer, Craig Rousseau and Wayne Faucher. Peyer says, "Arrowette was inspired by some footage of child beauty pagents and their stage mothers. Because of an injury, the original Arrowette can't shoot anymore, so she's pushing her child to follow in her footsteps. She's pretty driven to live the life she thinks she should have had through her child." **$1.75**

JLA #8

DC COMICS Superman. Batman. Wonder Woman. The Flash. All defeated and trapped in a hallucinogenic hell by the Key. With the big guns down, the only one who can save the day is…Green Arrow?!? What is he, like 12? Our money's on the Key. By Grant Morrison, Oscar Jimenez and Chip Wallace. **$1.95**

KA-ZAR #4

MARVEL Ka-Zar and company stop by good ol' NYC to pay a visit to Ka-Zar's bro, that rat-bastard Parnival Plunder. The reason for the visit? To give Parny the ol' Zabu-enema for sicking Gregor on Ka-Zar's kid Matthew. By Mark Waid, Andy Kubert and Jesse Delperdang. **$1.99**

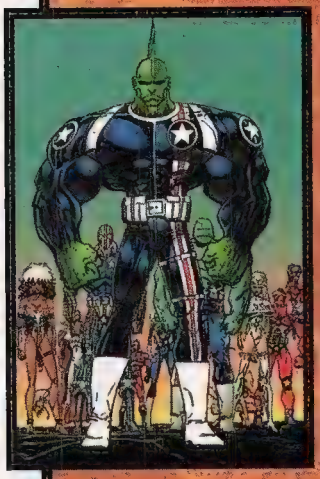
LEAVE IT TO CHANCE #8

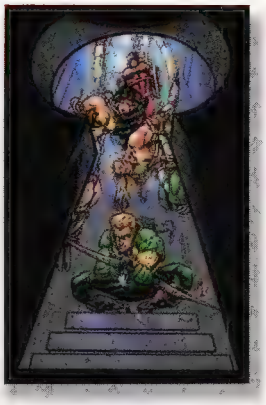
IMAGE The Phantom of the mall is wreaking havoc inside the…uh…well, mall of Devil's Echo. And with the Mystery Machine gang out having Scooby neutered, the only hope to solve the mystery of the spook falls to Chance Falconer, the toughest 14-year-old we know. By James Robinson, Paul Smith and George Freeman. **$2.50**

READ THIS BOOK!

SAVAGE DRAGON #40

IMAGE The Savage Dragon *not* a cop? Say it ain't so, Erik! Sad, but true. Seems the government's a little worried following all the crap those stinkin' Martians and other supervillains recently pulled, so they want a new superhero team for defense. Guess who they pick to lead it? Yep, old fin head himself. He'll be teamed with a bunch of guys and gals ya'll know and love (Even that freaky Mighty Man, a chick who turns into a guy superhero. Ick.). We'll get to see Dragon kick ass and take names, all in the name of the U.S. government. Yeah, baby! By Erik Larsen who says, "I'm not going to completely abandon the characters who were cops, though I will abandon them partially. It really just opens up more doors. With him being part of this group it will be less focused on the Chicago side and be more worldwide. He'll go to other countries, perhaps even other planets." **$2.50**





JLA #8

MAJOR BUMMER #1

LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES #95

DC COMICS The Legion meets the Metal Men (Organically Challenged Persons to those of you who are PC). Brainy needs some super-advanced technology and the Metal Men's responsometers (the computers holding their human personalities) are just what he needs. By Tom Peyer, Tom McCraw, Lee Moder and Mark Farmer. **$2.25**

LEGIONNAIRES #51

DC COMICS Well, the Legionnaires did it. They kicked Mordru's ass and now they're off to Disneyland! Well, not really, 'cause they kinda got their asses kicked in the process. Some of them were injured and some were killed, but they'll survive (Well, not the ones who were killed…). And they might even be picking up some new members. Whew, good thing! Their roster had dipped to only 49, which is waaay below that Legion comfort-zone. By Roger Stern, Tom McCraw, Jeffrey Moy and W.C. Carani. **$2.25**

LORDS OF MISRULE #6 (OF 6)

DARK HORSE Jack's had a rough time with all those weird happenings in his home town of Callow. But now he knows why. He ain't no regular human. He's a Sidh, an ancient race of shapeshifting creatures that preyed upon, but were also nearly destroyed by, humans. Now Jack's gotta learn to live with what he is and figure out what he can do for his people, both Sidh and human. By Dan Abnett, John Tomlinson, Steve White and Peter Snejbjerg. Abnet says, "[John Tomlinson, Steve White and I] were fascinated with urban myths. We plundered the local legends and twisted them to our own desires. *Lords of Misrule* was the end result. Our story is as real as a story a friend tells you. But this end of the story is just the beginning. We have huge possiblities of where the story will go." **MR $2.95**

MAJOR BUMMER #1

DC COMICS Louis Martin wakes up one morning with brains that'd make Einstein jealous and a body that makes Schwarzenegger look wimpy, but with an attitude that makes the slackers of the world look super-ambitious. All the guy wants to do is watch TV. Unfortunately, he finds himself worshipped by wannabe superheros and hated by supervillains. And for him this is a major bummer (Get it? It's a major bummer? The title is *Major Bummer*…never mind.). By John Arcudi, Doug Mahnke and Tom Nguyen. **$2.50**

MILK & CHEESE'S LATEST THING

SLAVE LABOR Those dairy products gone bad are back and as stupid as ever. Yaaaaay!!!! Imagine, two dairy products invading a

Weight Watchers meeting. Ya know there's gonna be some head (and fat) bashin' going on. Then they go out an' get drunk, wrap themselves in toilet paper and go running around the streets as mummies. Yep, same old Milk & Cheese. By Evan Dorkin. **$2.95**

PREACHER #28

VERTIGO/DC COMICS Lot's o' stuff to deal with this ish. Jesse and Tulip are back together, but since Jesse kinda abandoned Tulip a few issues back, he might be missing an important piece of his anatomy. Also, Starr's got a new physical disaster to deal with (remember, his last one wouldn't allow him to sit for a week). And what happened to Cassidy's brain? By Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon. **MR $2.50**

PREACHER SPECIAL: THE GOOD OLD BOYS

VERTIGO/DC Yee-Haaa! It's them Duke boys at it again. Bo and Luke catch Boss Hogg at another one of his schemes and...huh, it ain't the Dukes? It's Jody and T.C. from *Preacher*? Oh. Well, it's Jody and T.C. from *Preacher*, those two crazy, backwater, totally screwed-up thugs who used to work for Jesse's grandma, in a story *before* they worked for Jesse Custer's grandma. They get into some shoot-outs, find a woman, a dog and a cop on the run from some thugs and do their darndest to make life interesting (You can bet the dog ain't gonna be enjoying his stay with T.C. Yipe!). By Garth Ennis and Carlos Ezquerra. **MR $4.95**

PRIDE & JOY #2 (OF 4)

VERTIGO/DC Three Garth Ennis comics in a row! Unprecedented! And all three are about murder, mayhem and madness. Hmmm, think there's a pattern? Well, this one involves an expert hitman after a guy named Jimmy and his family ('cause Jimmy's got one of those sordid pasts). But what are Jimmy's kids gonna think of their dad when they discover he was once a bad man. We bet they'll think he's even cooler! By Garth Ennis and John Higgins. **MR $2.50**

QUANTUM AND WOODY #5

ACCLAIM Could it be? Could Quantum and Woody finally have ironed out their differences and become a real superhero team? Nah. But they do end up stopping a terrorist from holding some Americans hostage. That's pretty good for a start. Plus, after so many years of waiting (okay, so it's only been like five issues), we'll finally get to see those arm bands of theirs in action. By Christopher Priest, Mark Bright and Greg Adams. **$2.50**

PREACHER SPECIAL: THE GOOD OLD BOYS

ROBIN #44

PAPERBACK PICKS

Trade Paperbacks You Won't Wanna Miss

Bone Volume Four: The Dragonslayer (Cartoon Books)
Check out all the action from Fone Bone, Thorn, Gran'ma, Smiley, Phoney and those lovable stupid, stupid rat creatures. This paperback collects issues #20-#27 of *Bone*, telling of the big showdown between the stupid, stupid rat creatures and the citizens of the valley, who've unfortunately appointed Phoney Bone as their leader. By Jeff Smith. **$16.95**

Savage Dragon: A Talk With God (Image) ▼
The Savage Dragon's been through quite a bit in the last few issues. He's been proposed to, killed, kidnapped, had a kid, watched God and Satan fight, you name it. And now it's all collected in one book. *Talk With God* collects issues #27-#33 of the offbeat, hysterical and often over-the-top *Savage Dragon*. By Erik Larsen. **$17.95**

Sin City: That Yellow Bastard (Legend/Dark Horse)
Hartigan, that hardboiled detective, has just an hour to go till he retires. There's only one problem. There's this one case involving a little girl and a major psycho that he never wrapped up. Now Hartigan's gotta wrap up the case and go out with a bang. This funky paperback collects the entire six-issue mini-series, and has an extra 16 pages of story and an eight-page cover gallery. By the master of disaster, Frank Miller. **MR $15.00**

ROBIN #44

DC COMICS The Baffler, supervillain extraordinaire, has done what no other villain could do: outsmart the Boy Wonder (and his quasi-sidekick the Spoiler) in a building that's set to be blown to smithereens. The problem: he's trapped himself in the building too. Brainiac, this guy definitely is not. By Chuck Dixon, Staz Johnson and Bob Smith. **$1.95**

SCUD THE DISPOSABLE ASSASSIN #16

FIREMAN PRESS As usual with anything Scud, life's full of stuff that just doesn't make sense. There's all sorts o' bizarre robotic assassins, a weird creature full of interdimentional pockets, and a thing called Horse. This ish, the thing called Horse sucks Scud and Sussudio into a bunch o' parallel worlds filled with Godzilla-type monsters and 700-foot-tall human executives. Hey, avoid the brown acid. By Rob Schrab. **$2.95**

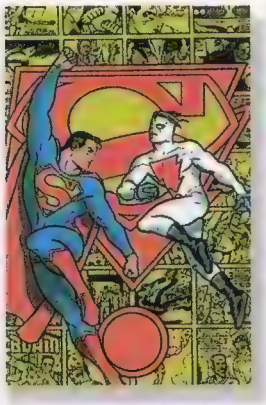
PICKS

SPIRIT: THE NEW ADVENTURES #1

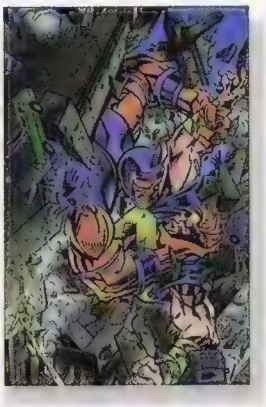
KITCHEN SINK He's just a regular guy. He ain't got no superpowers. He doesn't have a super-cool spandex costume. But he still kicks ass on crime. He's The Spirit. And he's back in comics. In this first ish, we'll get to see all about his origin, at least what *could* be his origin. Who is he? Where does he come from? Can he eat his body weight in cheese? This first issue is brought to you by the fantabulous *Watchmen* team of Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons. **$3.95**

SUPERMAN/MADMAN HULLABALOO #1 (OF 3)

DARK HORSE Uhhh…what's a Hullabaloo? Anyhoo, Superman and Madman together? Yeah, but not in the way you think. Some experiment goes wacky and these two heroes switch universes, but they get mixed up in the process. So Superman has half of Madman in him and vice-versa. Sound weird? Just wait till you see Superman swoop down to stop a robbery, then eat the criminals' eyes! Sounds like fun. By Mike Allred. **$2.95**



SUPERMAN/MADMAN HULLABALOO #1



THUNDERBOLTS #5

THUNDERBOLTS #5

MARVEL Baron Strucker and HYDRA plan to destroy the Thunderbolts by sending the Growing Man after them? The Growing Man? Hello? The T-bolts have Atlas. He grows too. Guess we know why HYDRA's never taken over the world. Because they're stupid! And hey, wanna know how the Masters of Evil became the Thunderbolts? Well then, check out *Thunderbolts '97*. Both books by the happenin' team of Kurt Busiek, Mark Bagley and Vince Russell. **$1.99—REGULAR; $2.99—THUNDERBOLTS '97**

UNTOLD TALES OF SPIDER-MAN #23

MARVEL New York's got a biiiiiig problem. The Crime Master's in town and he's trying to unite all the underworld crime gangs. Whee, it's gonna be unofficial "Shoot Bullets at Spidey" day. By Kurt Busiek, Pat Olliffe and Al Williamson! **99 CENTS**

YOUNG HEROES IN LOVE #3

DC COMICS Still the worst-named comic in existence today, but not a bad read. This ish: Totenjaeger The Relentless is back bustin' up the city again and our group of heroes has to go put him in his place. But this time they got some big time help in the form of Superman. But what's Supes gonna do when Hard Drive uses his telepathic powers to "persuade" Supes to join the team full-time? By Dan Raspler, Dev Madan and Keith Champagne. **$1.75** W

Also shipping in JUNE

Ash: Cinder and Smoke #2 (Event)
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Star Wars Books (Dark Horse)
In *Star Wars: Dark Force Rising #2*, Luke goes to C'Baoth, another Jedi Master, hoping this will help him destroy Grand Admiral Thrawn. *Star Wars: Tales of the Jedi—The Fall of the Sith Empire #1* shows the battle the Sith launches against the Republic. Which one will survive? *Star Wars: X-Wing Rogue Squadron—Requiem for a Rogue #3* reveals that the tourists Wedge saved are really spies following the Emperor. **$2.95 each**

Superman Books (DC)
Superman: The Man of Steel #70 sees the final battle between Superman and Scorn. In *Superman #126*, Superman must find evidence that Lex Luthor's innocent. *Adventures of Superman #549* shows Jimmy trying his bestest to make himself look better after his public disgrace. In *Action Comics #736*, Jimmy has to make good on his promise to deliver the story of the century. **$1.95 each**

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Some of the team is in space. Some have been kidnapped by Bastion. And Earth's fallin' apart, so it's up to Spider-Man and Marrow to handle things back home. **$1.99**

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Nick Fury teams up a young Grifter and Jean Grey to investigate some aliens. Say what? **$4.50**

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Sara investigates the source of a gang war ready to explode in New York. A war that leads to Jackie Estacado (a.k.a. the Darkness). **$2.50**

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Bastion's got the X-groups under his thumb, so Cyclops and Wolverine go looking for Prof. X, hoping he can help. **$1.99**

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Bastion goes on with his campaign to kill every mutant, even those that don't wanna be involved in the conflict, like possible new X-Man Cecilia Reyes. **$1.99** ●

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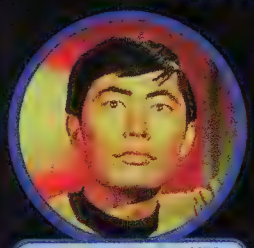

GEORGE TAKEI
(MR. SULU)

NICHELLE NICHOLS
(LT. UHURA)

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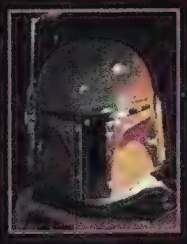

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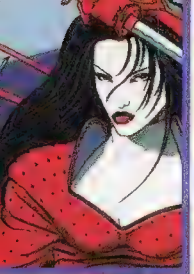

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11:00 Jeff Parker "Creating Comics…Planning & Developing Your Layout"
12:00 Brian Michael Bendis "In the Belly of the Whale…When a Major Publisher Buys Your Title"
1:00 Scott Rosema "Keeping it to a Minimum…Mastering the Dynamics of Simplicity"
2:00 Bill Reinhold "Pencilling and Inking…The Dynamic Duo"
3:00 Dan Vado "The Portfolio Process…Putting It All Together"
4:00 Steven T. Seagle "Selling Your Writing…Is It Selling Yourself?"
5:00 J Torres "Breaking Into the Industry…Guerilla Style"

Saturday July 5th

11:00 Tracey Heft "Conservation for the Collector…Storage, Preservation and Restoration of Comic Books"
12:00 Randy Zimmerman "Think Ink…Cleaning up the Lines"
1:00 Ed Beard Jr. "Is it Protected? Making Sure Your Work Stays Yours!"
2:00 Mike Baron "Scripting for Comics"
3:00 Jessica Abel "Maintaining Your Integrity While Presenting a Professional Image"
4:00 Tim Bradstreet "Covers and Cinematic Illustration"
5:00 Marc Hempel "Self-Publishing…A Journey of Art & Soul"

Sunday July 6th

11:00 Tracey Heft "Conservation for the Collector…Storage, Preservation and Restoration of Comic Books"
12:00 Greg Hyland "Funny is as Funny Does…Humor is Just a Box of Chocolates"
1:00 Doug Rice "Opportunities in Animation…Escape From LA"
2:00 Mike Baron "Scripting for Comics"
3:00 Mark Braun "Comics by Computer…Does it Lose Anything in Translation?"
4:00 Andy Bennett "Building Your Portfolio from the Ground Floor"

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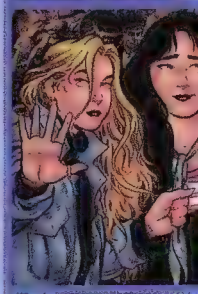

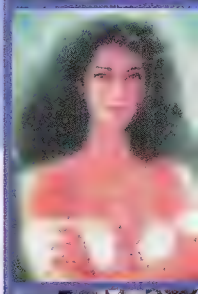

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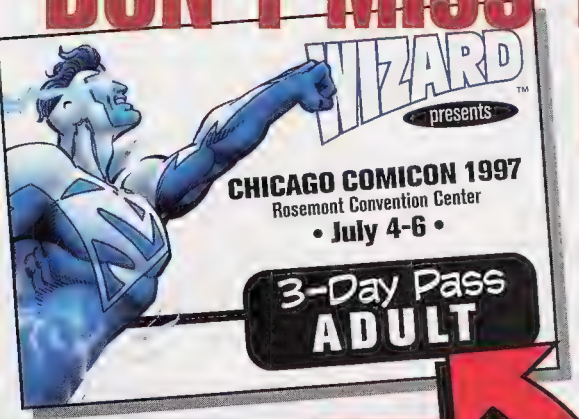

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Check Wizard World Online for registration info, professional guest lists and Comicon announcements. Only on America Online at Keyword: WIZARD; look in the News section.

WIZARD Presents the CHICAGO COMICON 1997! July 4-6

The Star Trek Trivia Contest!

Hey, Trekkies! Think you know your Star Trek trivia? How about your Star Trek comic trivia? Well, if you wanna boldly go where no comic fan has gone before (and win some neato prizes, too!), then simply answer the five trivia questions Marvel Comics has provided below and all of this could be yours:

Grand Prize (1):

One lucky reader will receive a Star Trek varsity letterman's jacket from Paramount Studios!

First Prize (5): Five readers will receive authentic costume pieces from the "Star Trek: Deep Space Nine" and "Star Trek: Voyager" TV shows, signed by the appropriate cast members!

Second Prize (10): Ten readers will receive autographed copies of various Star Trek titles, all from Marvel Comics!

Questions:

1. What class of starship is the *Voyager*?
2. What is the Cardassian name for Deep Space Nine?
3. In *Star Trek: The Early Voyages*, what species is Nano, Capt. Pike's command officer?
4. In *Star Trek: Starfleet Academy*, what is the name of the characters' Trill tutor?
5. In *Star Trek: Unlimited*, what was the name of the elite assassins hired to kill Mr. Mot?

This contest is sponsored by Marvel Comics, going where no comic book company has gone before.

Fill this shooting star out, put it in an envelope and send it to: Star Trek Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Deadline is July 31, 1997.

Trekkie Laws

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Marvel Comics, their immediate families and whoever keeps casting ex-"Benson" actors as Star Fleet personnel. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip, telephone number with area code and answers to the trivia questions on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: Star Trek Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. And "Trekker" doesn't sound any hipper than "Trekkie." All entries must be received at contest headquarters July 31, 1997. Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected randomly from among all correct entries by Wizard Press. Drawing will take place on August 15, 1997.
For a list of winners, available after August 15, 1997, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Star Trek Contest Winners, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Star Trek Trivia Entry Form

DEADLINE IS JULY 31, 1997!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

Answer #1 _____

Answer #2 _____

Answer #3 _____

Answer #4 _____

Answer #5 _____

TRAILER PARK

Wizard's column about Hollywood and TV and stuff like that

MORE MARVEL FOR SNIPES

By Rob Allstetter

Wesley Snipes just might be the actor to help Marvel get on track in the feature film business.

Snipes, taking a break from the set of **"Blade"** in Cahoga Park, Calif., told *Wizard* he already envisions himself portraying Marvel's vampire hunter in a sequel.

"Without a doubt," said Snipes, who is a first-time producer on "Blade." "If we don't, then the ending we shot won't make very much sense. We shot an ending that makes it look like there will be another one."

Snipes also said he hopes to get **"The Black Panther,"** another Marvel-based film and a pet project of his, before the cameras within the next two years.

"It's currently being rewritten under Stan Lee's supervision," Snipes said. "It's going to be real different from ['Blade']."

"Blade," which is a team effort from New Line Cinema, Marvel Studios and Snipes' Amen-Ra outfit, has a budget of about $45 million. Upon wrapping of principal photography in May, "Blade" faces extensive post-production work and is tentatively scheduled to be released in February.

The movie was written by David Goyer ("The Crow: City of Angels" and "Nick Fury") and is being directed by Steve Norrington ("Death Machine"). Around the set, both seemed pleased with how the movie was progressing.

"In the movie, the Blade character is quite similar to the character in the comics," said Goyer, an avid comics collector, who also has a Venom script for New Line that is out to directors.

"It's very much like the Marvel comic—hyper-real," added Norrington, a frenetic British director in charge of his first big-budget film.

The film's story pits Blade, half-vampire and half-human, against Deacon Frost (Stephen Dorff), who is trying to bring about an apocalypse known in the vampire world as The Blood Tide. Frost overthrows the Overlord of the Assembly of Vampire Lords and then attempts to use Blade's mixed blood to invoke a sinister vampire god, La Magra.

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"Black Panther" and a "Blade" sequel are in Snipes' sights

The cast also includes Kris Kristofferson as Whistler, a new character and Blade's mentor, and N'bushe Wright as Dr. Karen Jansen, who attempts to cure Blade and then herself after she is bitten by another vampire.

PUNY HUMANS—HULK CHANGE!

The second season of **"The Incredible Hulk"** animated series on the United Paramount Network will be vastly different from the first.

"It's definitely lighter," said Greg Johnson, who returns as the series' story editor. "We have a mandate from the network to make it lighter in tone and make it a lot of fun."

Gone are the military and angst-driven elements of the first season. The first of the second season's eight episodes will tie up loose ends from the first season and steer the series in a new direction.

"Basically, Banner is no longer a wanted fugitive," Johnson said. "There will be no more General Ross, Betty plays a minor role and Rick Jones is gone. The focus is on the **She-Hulk** and Banner, with the Gargoyle and Leader still very present. They will be in at least four episodes."

The show will still be produced at New World Animation, but Ron Myrick is now producing. Myrick worked on "Bureau of Alien Detectors" for Saban Entertainment and UPN last season.

Bob Forward and Meg McLaughlin, who wrote episodes for the first season of "The Incredible Hulk," are contributing to the second. John Semper, story editor and producer of Fox's "Spider-Man" series, also is writing for the new season.

Semper is writing an episode that guest-stars Doctor Strange and is loosely based on *The Incredible Hulk* #371 and a "Dark Hulk" story. The Red Skull and the Bi-Beast are featured in another episode, and Johnson has created a new villainess called Allure, who beguiles men into doing her bidding.

The gray Hulk—who becomes Mr. Fixit, as in the comic—and the green Hulk both appear in the second season. In fact, when

"Hulk" gets a new direction for second season

Banner changes into the Hulk, viewers will not know which one will appear. Johnson said a battle will be taking place between the two Hulks on the landscape of Banner's mind, and whichever Hulk is dominant in the battle will emerge when Banner changes.

The She-Hulk, too, will be undergoing a few changes from her two appearances in the first season.

"We're pulling the sexuality back," Johnson said. "She's not that Mae West type, like in the comics. She's more sassy than over-the-top sexy."

Despite the changes, Johnson said he hopes the series will still appeal to Hulk fans.

"It's not a sitcom by any means, although the plots are lighter," he said. "There will be no more of the dark tone and no more of the tortured Bruce Banner—that's way out. But he's still the Hulk and transforms into a beast."

HASSELHOFF IS FURY-OUS

It's been confirmed: **David Hasselhoff**, star of television's "Baywatch," will play the title role in what could be the first of several **"Nick Fury"** telefilms from Fox. Production began in early May in Vancouver and the film is set for a '97-'98 season air date. The film was written by David Goyer and is being directed by Rod Hardy.

The story has Fury, with trademark eyepatch and cigars, coming out of retirement to rejoin S.H.I.E.L.D. and face a reborn HYDRA under the direction of Viper, who is the daughter of Fury's dead nemesis, Baron Von Strucker.

Fury and his team of agents, headquartered out of the Helicarrier, must stop HYDRA's attempts to release the Death's Head Virus and resurrect Von Strucker. Among the S.H.I.E.L.D. agents in the story are Dum-Dum Dugan, Valentina Allegro de Fontaine, Kate Neville (an ESPer), Gabe Jones, Arkady Vladimirovich and Clay Quartermain.

David Hasselhoff (below) to be Nick Fury next season

Everett Collection

MIGHTY MARVEL FILM UPDATE

Chris Columbus has pulled out of directing Fox's **"Fantastic Four."** He's still producing, through his 1492 Productions, and assisting Mike France on the script. The new director is Pete Segal ("Tommy Boy")....Fox has tentatively scheduled the **"Silver Surfer"** and **"X-Men"** films for summer 1998 and Christmas 1998 releases, respectively. Ed Solomon, who wrote "Men in Black," has been brought in to work on the "X-Men" script....Philip Kaufman ("The Right Stuff") has been talking to Marvel about a **Sub-Mariner** film....J.D. Zeik is writing a **"Luke Cage"** script for Pressman Films.

Sub-Mariner (above right) and Luke Cage are on top for future movies

BURTON'S DEAL: THE MAN OF STEEL

Tim Burton helped Michael Keaton become Batman. Now, apparently, he will be trying to help **Nicolas Cage** become **Superman**.

According to *Daily Variety*, Burton, who directed "Batman" and "Batman Returns," was in final negotiations to direct "Superman Reborn," Warner Bros.' attempt to relaunch Superman as a feature-film franchise. Cage has been attached to the title role for weeks, and the movie is targeted to begin production in October for a summer 1998 release.

Kevin Smith, who earned positive reviews for his spring film "Chasing Amy," has written a script for "Superman Reborn," based on the 1992 "Death of Superman" comics event. However, *Variety* reported Burton is hiring another screenwriter. Akiva Goldsman, who co-wrote "Batman Forever" and wrote the upcoming "Batman & Robin" and "Lost in Space," has been mentioned as a possible writer.

DORN DOUBLES UP ON SUPES

Michael Dorn, Worf on "Star Trek: The Next Generation" and "Star Trek: Deep Space Nine," is doing double duty on the upcoming season of the **"Superman"** animated series on Kids' WB. He's doing the voices of both Kalibak and Steel on upcoming episodes.

"Our Kalibak is so much more brutal and bestial than Worf," said "Superman" producer Bruce Timm. "So [Dorn] lowered his voice even more deeper."

The producers then went back to Dorn, who's also done voices on such series as "Gargoyles" and "Fantastic Four," to do Steel.

"In meeting him, he has a such a pleasant regular speaking voice," Timm said. "So we brought him in and sat him down in front of the microphone and said, 'Okay, Michael, just use your regular voice.'

"And as soon as the microphone goes on, it was like [*Deepening voice*] way down here. He laughed, 'I don't get to use my regular voice anymore, so I don't know what it sounds like.'

"He's great at Steel. You won't recognize it immediately as Michael Dorn at all."

John Henry Irons is actually in two episodes of the series, making his debut as Steel in the second. He's an employee of LexCorp who's trying to build a super-suit for Lex Luthor.

It's not a coincidence that Steel is appearing on "Superman" following his own, upcoming live-action movie starring Shaquille O'Neal (see this issue's special report on the film).

"It's synergy at work," admitted producer Alan Burnett. "But it turned out well."

"It's not quite the movie and not quite the comics, but we made it work within our framework," added producer Paul Dini.

HATCHER TO BE A BOND BABE

Teri Hatcher, star of "Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman," is going from Superman to super-spy. She has joined the cast of "Tomorrow Never Dies," the new **James Bond** movie starring Pierce Brosnan.

Hatcher will play the wife of a media mogul (played by Jonathan Pryce) who is trying to start a global war. Her character shares a past with Bond.

Meanwhile, Hatcher's television series continues to slump in the ratings, and speculation has begun about its future. Despite a $14,000 advertisement in *USA Today* paid for by a fan club (with help from ABC), the first episode of "Lois & Clark" in its Saturday night time period on April

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Teri Hatcher is ready to take on 007

12 had the series' worst Nielsen ratings ever. The show placed 96th out of 118 shows for the week and was ABC's least-watched program. The following show was also ABC's lowest-ranked for its week, at 90th. It appears a Superbaby storyline is in the works, and that might affect the show's ratings.

SHORT TAKES

Felix Alcala directed the **"Justice League of America"** telefilm that is serving as a pilot for a possible series on CBS. Word was expected soon about whether the project will be developed as a series. More cast news for the pilot: **David Ogden Stiers** ("M*A*S*H," "Better Off Dead") will play J'onn J'onzz, and **Miguel Ferrer** ("Twin Peaks," "Star Trek III") will be Dr. Eno....According to *Daily Variety*, **Michael Piller**, who has worked as a writer and producer on the "Star Trek: The Next Generation" and helped create "Star Trek: Deep Space Nine," will write the next Star Trek film, the ninth in the series and the third to feature the "Next Generation" cast....At press time, Erik Larsen was unsure if the **Savage Dragon** animated series would return for a third season on the USA network....Ray-Ban is having a promotional tie-in with **"Men in Black,"** which is due in theaters on July 2. Tommy Lee Jones and Will Smith wear the company's line of summer glasses in the comic-adapted film....Pamela Lee and **"Barb Wire"** were nominated in the "Best Fight" category for the MTV Movie Awards, which airs June 12 on MTV. The network's own Beavis and Butt-Head were nominated in the "Best On-Screen Duo" category. Best film nominees include "Independence Day," "Jerry Maguire," "William Shakespeare's Romeo & Juliet," and "The Rock."...**Christopher Reeve**, the star of four Superman films who was paralyzed in a 1995 horse-riding accident, was awarded a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. "In the Gloaming," the multi-star HBO-exclusive movie he directed, aired days later....**"Sabrina The Teenage Witch,"** the sitcom based on the Archie Comics series, has been picked up for a second season by ABC. Showtime has been rebroadcasting the

Steve Wayda Polygram Filmed Entertainment

Is "Barb Wire" award bound?

THE BAT-BOX

He was only on screen for a few seconds and you couldn't even see his face, but Jeep Swenson left an impression with the first trailer for "Batman & Robin."

Swenson's pumped-up Bane character lifted the Bat-signal out of its moorings. Okay, so maybe in real life, a crane helped Swenson move the apparatus, but the maneuver made a point: Batman has a super-strong foe this time.

Or as Uma Thurman, who plays Poison Ivy, would joke to director Joel Schumacher on the set: "Oh, Joel, Bane's stealing the movie again."

Swenson, a former professional wrestler, stands 6-foot-5 and weighs 402 pounds. And, as he likes to point out, his mammoth frame contains just 8 1/2 percent body fat.

"Bane's a super-menace," Swenson said. "It's not the Riddler, Joker or Penguin, not just a diabolical dwarf or a man with paint on. Bane is bigger than life, but he really exists."

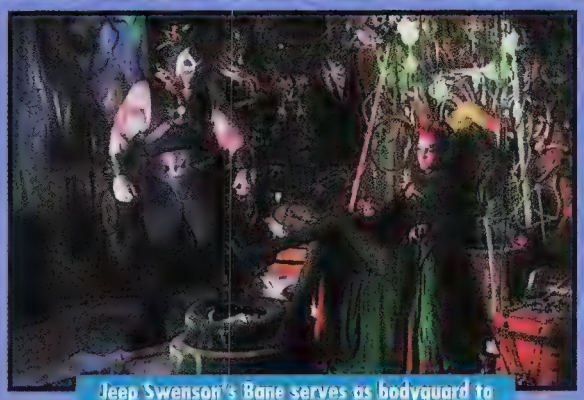
He "exists" thanks to Swenson, who ended a long casting call almost the minute Schumacher saw him. Still, Swenson had to endure a makeup session—no prosthetics, though—that would last anywhere from two to five hours to achieve the look of Bane, who is pumped to extreme proportions through the drug called Venom.

"The makeup is really wild, almost reptilian," Swenson said. "It looks like I was dredged out of a river. I have big, purply varicose veins."

The movie version of Bane was created in the same South American jungle lab that spawned Poison Ivy. Schumacher called Bane "Poison Ivy's pit bull," and Swenson threw himself into the many action scenes.

"I had to do first unit and second unit and almost all the stunts," he said. "There's nobody my size to do the stunts, although they did use a stuntman in a couple of scenes."

Bane's involvement went so well that Swenson said his role was expanded. He did four days of insert shooting after principal photography wrapped, and lines were added for the character, who originally did not talk in the film.



Christina Lóss

Jeep Swenson's Bane serves as bodyguard to Uma Thurman's Poison Ivy

Swenson, whose credits include "Bulletproof," "Big Brawl" and "No Holds Barred," said he anticipates a steady stream of script proposals after the June 20 release of "Batman & Robin."

But what about Bane?

"You will see Bane again," Swenson said. "I can't necessarily tell you when, but Bane will return."

In other Bat-news, Arnold Schwarzenegger, who plays Mr. Freeze, was expected to make a full recovery from elective surgery on April 16 to replace a heart valve. Schwarzenegger, 49, was scheduled to rest from the surgery and begin promotions for "Batman & Robin" in late May.

Schwarzenegger opted to have the operation for a congenital heart condition, even though it was not causing him any problems.

"I've never felt sick or had any symptoms at all, but I knew I'd have to take care of this condition sooner or later," Schwarzenegger said in a statement. "I said to the doctors, 'Let's do it now, while I'm young and healthy.' They agreed this was the way to go."

Chris O'Donnell, who returns as Robin, married Caroline Fentress, a school teacher, in Washington, D.C., on April 19. O'Donnell is 26; Fentress 24. ■ *RA*

original "Sabrina" movie in May....Nickelodeon has decided not to produce more episodes of **"Space Cases,"** the television series created by Peter David and Bill Mumy....Catfish Comics' **Sinnamon** character has been optioned for a live-action feature film by Toronto's Culture Shock Productions. "Basically, I saw Sinnamon on the stands, and after reading it, I thought it would be ideal for a movie," said John Temou of Culture Shock, whose credits include "Deathlords" and the award-winning television documentary "Bones of Contention"....Beau Smith said that Filmworks is "moving ahead" on a direct-to-video movie based on his ***Parts Unknown*** comic....Natasha Henstridge will reportedly star in **"Species 2,"** which begins filming this summer; it's not yet known if she'll play the same character she played in "Species."...**"King of the Hill,"** the animated series from "Beavis and Butt-Head" creator Mike Judge, has been renewed for a second season by Fox. Fox has also put in a full season order renewal on "**Millennium**."...Comic book artist **Bernie Wrightson** illustrated *TV Guide*'s April 26 "The Shining" cover and an interior piece for a reprint of the book's "lost" prologue, "Before the Play." **W**

Rob Allstetter sold his entire "Thundarr the Barbarian" collection to help fund the USA Today *"Lois & Clark" ad.*

Celebrity Profile

Joel Schumacher likes to point out he and Batman were created at the same time. The film director was born in 1939, the same year a young artist named Bob Kane thought up his "Bat-man."

Schumacher and Batman continue to be linked, with Schumacher's second Batman film, "Batman & Robin," arriving in theaters on June 20 (his first was 1995's "Batman Forever"). A third Batflick from him is tentatively scheduled for the summer of 1999.

Everett Collection

On the Batcave set, inside a dome in Long Beach, Calif., Schumacher offered the following Bat-chat.

Comparing "Batman & Robin" to "Batman Forever": "Much more fun. Maybe because I had never done a Batman movie before, [the first one] was like climbing Mt. Everest and not knowing if you would get down alive. This time, just because you climbed it once, doesn't mean you won't fall, but perhaps you know more [about] the right kind of equipment, the right time of the year and also who to tie to the rope."

The cast and crew: "The cast was a dream cast. We had no problematic people on it. Most of the people making the film came back by choice because [they liked] working on the other film. This has really been the most fun I've had making a film. I just hope it translates to the audience."

On George Clooney, the new Batman: "He's much more accessible as Batman."

On Bruce Wayne: "He's a busy man—and he looks good doing it. [*Laughs*] He gives money away all day and puts a rubber suit on at night."

Superman or Batman? "Jenette Kahn at DC Comics likes to think the world is divided between Batman fans and Superman fans—that is the DC Comics point of view. I was never a Superman fan. I was always a Batman fan. Why? I don't know.

"So, when the heads of Warner Bros. asked me if I would take over the Batman franchise, it was a dream come true, because as a child they were my favorite comics."

Humor in the Batman films: "They are called comic books, and we like the humor part of it."

Reflections on "Batman Forever": "I think our biggest success was how much mail and how much Internet [response] we still get every day from the Batman fans saying that they loved it. That was very satisfying."

Hopes for "Batman & Robin": "I hope people will enjoy this and it will please both the Batman fans as well as the action fans." ■ *RA*

SPECIAL REPORT
on next page

CAN YOU KEEP A SECRET?

An exclusive look at things to come:

WHO LIVES?
WHO DIES?
WHAT'S WITH QUANTUM'S 'FRO?
So ask yourself...

ARE YOU FAN ENOUGH?

SPECIAL REPORT: MAN OF 'STEEL'

By Rob Allstetter

Writer/director Kenneth Johnson plays with big-budget toys in new 'Steel' movie

Kenneth Johnson sounds like a kid playing with Star Wars toys. "Pazuuuuumszzz!" he exclaims. "Pow! Pow! Pow! Pow! Ka-blam!"

But Johnson is playing with much bigger—and more expensive—toys.

The writer and director of the "Steel" live-action film starring Shaquille O'Neal, Johnson eyes the two computer monitors in front of him. He maneuvers the mouse to call up a new computerized reel from "Steel," which plays action sequences both on the right monitor and on a large television screen sandwiched between the monitors and some high-tech equipment. Speakers provide movie-quality sound, but where the sound effects haven't been completed yet, Johnson is providing his own—and having a good time doing it.

We're in Building 4, room 135, on the Warner Bros. lot in Burbank. A cold, hard rain drapes over Southern California, and although Johnson says post-production is like "swimming through molasses with weights on," it's much more fun indoors than outdoors.

Photos: Robert Zuckerman

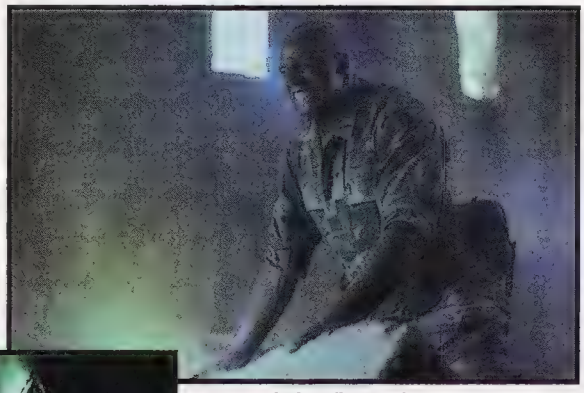
The director is showing action-heavy portions of the film to Amy Harrington of Warner Bros., who helps coordinate the 200-plus visual effects "Steel" will have when it arrives in theaters in August. It's impressive stuff: lots of laser guns and sonic weapons, and a scene with O'Neal's John Henry Irons pushing a fear-stricken police officer out of the way of a blazing helicopter just before it crashes.

"Cool. Verrrrr-ry cool," Harrington beams.

Then we get to O'Neal's scenes in the Steel armor. Gulp. This is what Johnson calls a "buy" moment, where the audience has to suspend reality and "buy" into a key portion of the film—the Steel armor.

Shaq, the $120 million center of the Los Angeles Lakers, looks outlandish, all 7-foot-3 of him in the Steel duds, with no cape and his eyes and lower face exposed so he can see and speak.

The more you see Shaq run around and get involved in the action—all purposely filmed at night to help the believability—the more you can begin to buy it. It might not compare to Arnold Schwarzenegger's Mr. Freeze suit in "Batman & Robin" this summer, but no one is expecting it to.



As Steel, Shaquille O'Neal made "all the moments work"

"Steel" simply isn't going to be as big as Warner's other DC Comics movie franchise. Even Johnson admits feeling a stepchild syndrome when comparing "Steel" to "Batman & Robin," which is in top-secret production on stages just down the way on the Warner lot.

"They get $90 million and I get 22—how does this work, exactly? But you want it to look the same and make as much money? Yeah, right," Johnson laughs. "We always looked at this as the blue-collar Batman. Bruce Wayne works out of Wayne Manor with his millions, and John Henry Irons works out of a junkyard, piecing stuff together.

"It's more of an upbeat film than the Batman films are. This has got more of a sense of humor to it."

Part of making it fun is creating likable characters. "The leading lady is a woman named Sparky [played by Annabeth Gish], who is in a wheelchair," says Johnson, who wrote "Steel" in a little more than a month. "There is an accident at the beginning of the picture during a weapons test, and she's injured and winds up a paraplegic. She has a growth arc to recognize her potential and capabilities, the same way John Henry does."

The villain of "Steel" is Nathaniel Hale, played by Judd Nelson. His compulsiveness during the weapons testing contributes to the accident that paralyzes Sparky and kills a U.S. senator.

Nathaniel is discharged from the army and sets about selling weapon plans to illegal manufacturers. He uses gangs to pull off bank robberies and the like as "infomercials" for the weapons.

Richard Roundtree plays a key role as Uncle Joe, who helps construct the Steel armor to stop Nathaniel. "He's a sculptor who works in a junkyard. He's the wise old guy that our hero goes to for guidance and training and support."

Oddly, Johnson had never heard of O'Neal before "Steel," but he quickly grew to like the fun-loving Shaq.

"He's really good. He's a very natural guy, and the fascinating thing about him as an actor is that he knew everybody's lines," Johnson says. "He managed to make all the moments really work where he had emotional scenes and had to connect."

Though originally slated for April, Johnson says "Steel" could be one of the summer's surprises.

"We're really shooting for the 'Raiders of the Lost Ark' audience, the 'Star Wars' audience, the 'Back to the Future' audience—a very broad-based audience," Johnson says. "Everybody, from eight to 80, is going to be able to get into this movie and enjoy it." W

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CHARACTER PROFILE:

Nightwing

BY MATTHEW BRADY

VITAL STATS

REAL NAME: Richard "Dick" Grayson
AGE: mid-20s
HEIGHT: 6'
WEIGHT: 175 lbs.
HAIR COLOR: Black
EYE COLOR: Blue
FIRST APPEARANCE: (as Robin) *Detective Comics* #38; (as Nightwing) *Tales of the Teen Titans* #44
TITLES CURRENTLY APPEARING IN: *Nightwing*, occasional issues of *Detective Comics*, *Robin* and *Batman Chronicles*
MAJOR ENEMIES: Blockbuster, Two-Face, Scarecrow, Lady Vic, Lady Stallion and Black Mask

ORIGIN

The son of trapeze performers, Dick Grayson was trained to be an acrobat almost before he learned to walk. Tragically, when he was a young boy, Grayson's parents were killed by mobsters trying to extort the circus owner. While investigating the crime, Batman felt empathy for the boy, and, as Bruce Wayne, adopted Grayson as his ward. Shortly thereafter, Wayne allowed Grayson to become Batman's partner, calling him Robin, the Boy Wonder. As Robin, Grayson learned quickly, and soon became an agile fighter and detective, second only to his mentor. Grayson always displayed a streak of individuality, and helped form the original Teen Titans, and two later versions of the team.

Late in his career as Robin, Grayson was almost fatally shot by the Joker. Realizing the constant danger Robin faced, Batman "fired" Grayson as his sidekick. The break was physical as well as philosophical, as Grayson realized that his goals and methods were no longer the same as Wayne's.

Grayson soul-searched for weeks, finally realizing his desire to be a costumed hero with his own identity, separate from that of Batman. Grayson slowly assembled a new costume and gear, contemplating his influences, and how he could reflect them in his new identity. During a crisis with the Titans, Grayson was called upon to rescue the team, and Nightwing was born.

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING

As Nightwing, Grayson led the Titans on many adventures, and developed a deep love for the alien princess Koriand'r, a.k.a. Starfire. Grayson's final days as team leader were permanently marred by the intervention of former Titan Raven, who killed the officiating minister as he was about to marry Grayson and Starfire. The trauma shook Grayson, and shortly thereafter, he abdicated leadership of the team to Arsenal. Following his departure from the Titans, Grayson returned to Gotham, aiding Batman when he could.

Their relationship was almost stretched to the breaking point when Wayne, his back broken by Bane, asked a virtual stranger (Azrael) to stand in as Batman instead of Grayson, a mistake which almost destroyed Gotham City, but one that Grayson helped rectify.

Any doubts Grayson had about their partnership were dissolved when Wayne, who had just reclaimed the Batman identity, asked Grayson to stand in as Batman for a period of time. Grayson took the task as an honor, but again felt he was just role-playing, and not being himself.

Similar to most fathers and sons, Wayne and Grayson have had their share of disagreements over the years—some heated, others maddeningly cool, as the two proud men stubbornly refuse to bend, even a little, for one another. Through hours of heartfelt conversation over the years, the two have finally resolved their differences. They now act as partners, and Grayson plays the older brother to Tim Drake, the new Robin.

Still trying to find his own identity, Grayson quit the hero business for a short time, but soon found himself entangled in international intrigue. Grayson realized it was his calling to be Nightwing, and picked up the role once again. During the adventure, Grayson put many issues about his parents, Wayne and his childhood to rest, and truly accepted his role as Nightwing.

Grayson once again felt it was time to break off on his own, this time moving to Gotham's upriver neighbor Blüdhaven, a town worse off than Gotham in many ways. While he's only been in town a short time, Nightwing has started to clean up the corrupt city, and most importantly, make a name for himself.

Above: Dick Grayson in his civvies

At left: Nightwing's name derives from his two main influences—Batman ("night" is his main element) and Superman ("wing," for flight)

UPCOMING HIGHLIGHTS

Nightwing is going to keep its hard-edged crime feel going throughout the summer, as *Nightwing* #11 will see the violent conclusion of the first major story arc, which pits Nightwing against Blüdhaven's crimelord Blockbuster in a winner-take-all battle to the finish. In #12, Grayson sees Blüdhaven through the eyes of one of its victims as he catches a young boy breaking into his apartment, and then, as Nightwing, looks after him on what becomes the deadliest night of the boy's life. *Nightwing* will round out the summer with a three-parter guest-starring Batman. Blüdhaven's no Gotham, so Bats is a fish outta water when it comes to trying to figure out how the city operates, giving Grayson the chance to teach the teacher. Also, *Nightwing* writer Chuck Dixon promises, "Batman and Nightwing have to face a trap that I guarantee you they've never faced before." Will they get out? "I'm not telling!"

RECOMMENDED HIGHLIGHTS

Want to check out some prime Nightwing appearances? Check out these picks by Dixon and the *Wizard* staff:

• ***Tales of the Teen Titans* #42-#44, *Annual* #3**—Featuring the first appearance of Nightwing! In a story titled "The Judas Contract," the Titans are taken out and captured by one of their own, who's an agent of the Terminator…but can a powerless Dick Grayson save them? (Also available in trade paperback.)

• ***Robin* #13**—The final chapter of "Prodigal," in which Wayne comes back to reclaim the cape and cowl of Batman from Grayson. "Dick and Bruce finally have the heart-to-heart talk they've needed for years," Dixon says. "It worked out pretty well, and served to smooth things over for them both."

• ***Nightwing* (ongoing series) #7-#8**—Nightwing realizes he's been going about fighting Blüdhaven's corruption by using his fists instead of his detective skills. Too bad Blockbuster gets in the way of that philosophy….

SIMILAR TASTES

If Nightwing and his adventures in a corrupt town sound like your thing, Dixon recommends you check out the crime novels of James Elroy. "The books were set in Los Angeles in the '40s and '50s, and have the same level of corruption I'm going for in *Nightwing*," Dixon says. "Everyone is on the take, and everyone is in it for themselves."

For other street-level crime books, *Wizard* recommends books like *Stray Bullets*, *Batman: The Long Halloween*, and oh, yeah, anything that says "Sin City." W

Matthew Brady, who previews this summer's hottest books in this issue, wants to knock off Barney Fife, and team with Andy Griffith to fight crime and corruption.

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MANGA SCENE

By Carl Gustav Horn

A GUIDE TO JAPANESE COMICS AND ANIMATION BOTH PAST AND PRESENT

APOCALYPSE MADE FUN

Masamune Shirow's 'Orion' means mass destruction and massive laughs

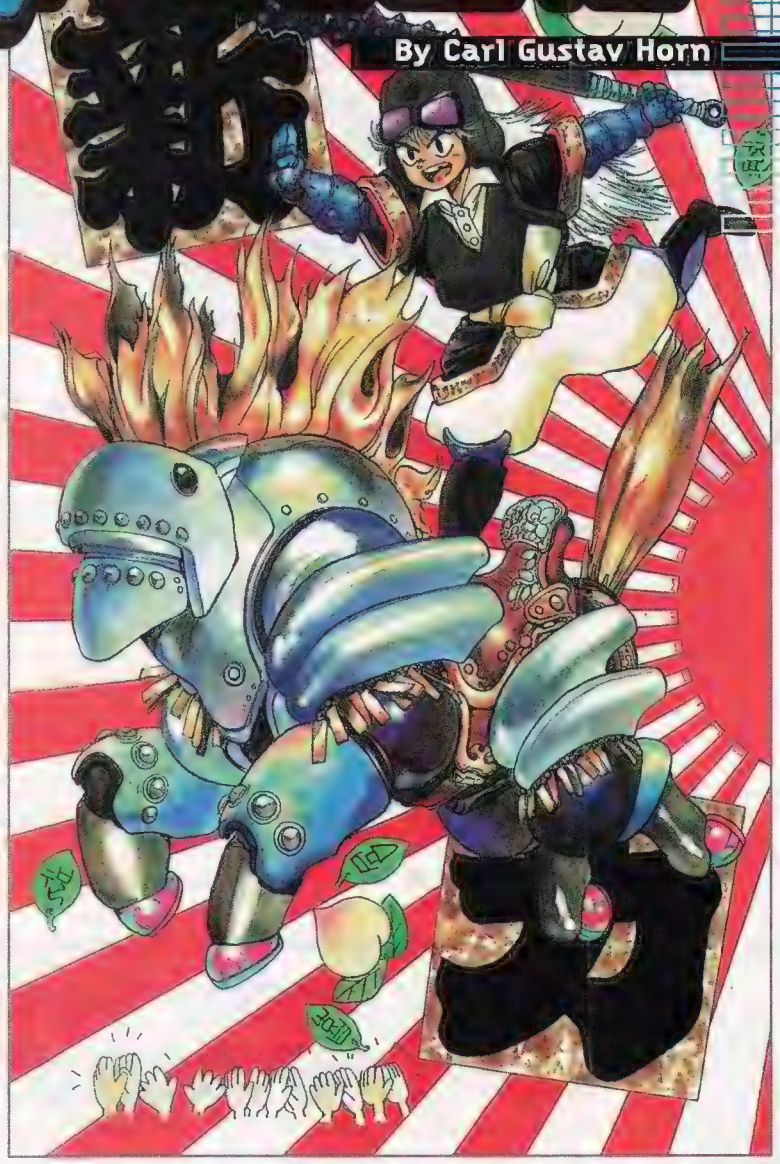
It's the end of the world as they know it, and they feel fine.

Such is the mood of *Orion*, Masamune Shirow's fantasy creation that mixes black humor along with elements of Asian mysticism (such as Indian Tantric Buddhism), the legendary gods of Japan, the classic Chinese fortune-telling book *I Ching*, and a dash of author H.P. Lovecraft.

Set in ancient times, the Earth is home to a great magical alien empire, the Yamata People's Empire that has colonized our world from the distant stars. But this magic is no simple wand-pointing and backwards-phrase muttering mumbo-jumbo. Shirow ingeniously creates a "magic" with fundamental laws behind it, treating it as if it were physics. And just like physics brought us great ideas like the atomic bomb, the "psycho-science" of the Yamata People's Empire has come up with the dubious scheme to build a reactor which will collect all the bad karma in the galaxy and destroy it. Unfortunately, Earth could go with it....

Caught up in this fast track to oblivion are two main characters: the reckless teenage sorceress Seska and the God of Destruction known as Susano. Seska works as a "transnav," using her mind powers to guide interstellar spacecraft, but her real interests seem to lie in drinking, lazing about and wondering how she's going to get the handsome Imperial Guard Ronnel to notice her. Her big chance comes when she literally stumbles into activating the negative karma reactor, which turns a bratty, shameless Seska into a bratty, shameless super-being.

Only in a situation this crazy could the God of Destruction be the *good* guy of the story, yet it's up to the hastily-summoned Susano (who wears a World War I flying ace cap and wields a 6-foot-long spiked club) to save the foolish mortals and stop their reactor from obliterating the galaxy. But it's too bad he's so pissed off about the whole



To save the world, Susano, the God of Destruction, might have to kill a couple million people

Meet Seska, *Orion's* catalyst of chaos

***Orion* combines fantasy, Asian mysticism and concepts by H.P. Lovecraft**

insane situation he plans on teaching Earth's inhabitants what *true* power is like. And if his "lesson" happens to kill a couple million people...so be it.

Shirow's design work is just as diverse and intensive and in this wild flight into fantasy as it is in his "hard sci-fi" manga. The ships Seska navigates are slave galleys, psychically "rowed" by long ranks of bottled, griping brains. In *Orion*'s world, the characters don't use alarm clocks. Instead, they put a magical strip of paper with a delayed-action spell on their foreheads. The spell, when activated, will literally blow a character out of bed. If Shirow can do that for *Orion*'s household appliances, you don't have to guess what he does for its weapons of mass destruction. Gods and mortals alike swing impossibly huge, rune-covered swords, vomit up wads of voodoo puke, and launch the dreaded "cubular warheads."

As they used to say on "Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids," if you're not careful, you'll learn something before you're through. No violent or absurd act goes without a paragraph of dialogue, a handy diagram or chart, plus a lengthy footnote from the author to explain why this particular situation couldn't happen in real life.

Although *Orion*'s nonsense lectures on "psycho-science" are not like the serious social or philosophical commentary of his *Ghost in the Shell* or *Appleseed*, you'll still find yourself reading and re-reading to get the full appreciation of the fascinating world Shirow creates in the story. So sit down, class. Open your copy of *Orion* and start reading.

When Carl Horn gave Masamune Shirow an apple before class, Mr. Shirow stared at it and clocked Carl in the melon.

F.Y.I.

Orion was originally published by Dark Horse Comics in a bimonthly, six-issue format from 1992-1993—a period in which manga companies such as Dark Horse and Viz were abandoning the older practice of square-bound issues as not being cost-effective. This helps to explain why the six issues of *Orion* varied in price, page count, and binding, with #1 and #6 being $3.95, and #2-5 being $2.95. The entire *Orion* series is available as a graphic novel from Dark Horse for $17.95.

ANIME PICK OF THE MONTH

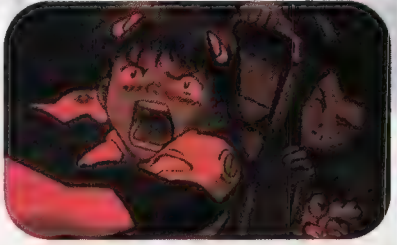
NEON GENESIS EVANGELION

(A.D. Vision, subtitled/dubbed, 60 mins., $29.95/24.95, now available)

The future in "Evangelion" is unsettling: The 20th century ended with the "Second Impact," a supposed meteor strike that melted the Antarctic ice cap and killed off half of humanity. But the truth is related to mysterious entities called the "Angels," and in the year 2015, a secret U.N. research organization called NERV prepares to resist the return of the Angels with biomechanical robot weapons called the "Eva Units."

Far more dangerous may be the conflict between the three different generations of characters at NERV, from the 14-year-old children who pilot the Eva Units, their 30-year-old officers who witnessed the Second Impact when they were the pliots' age, to the pilots' parents, the scientists and founders of NERV, who know far too much and tell far too little.

Voted favorite anime release of 1996 both by Japanese fans in their *Animage* magazine poll and by American fans in the 5th annual Internet newsgroup poll, the 26-episode "Neon Genesis Evangelion" combines high-tech combat, "X-Files"-like conspiratorial mysteries and a searing psychological realism in its characters, to make what is unquestionably the hardest-hitting TV anime show of the 1990s.



MANGA PICKS OF THE MONTH
Must-read manga books shipping in June

BATTLE ANGEL ALITA, PART EIGHT #1 (OF 9)

Viz Comics

The final mini-series begins! In this issue, Alita escapes mad scientist Desty Nova's sinister trap and faces him and his hard-core assistants head on! The countdown begins for Alita's final confrontation with the man who took her surrogate father from her!

BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL: CALL OF THE WORM #3 (OF 3)

Dark Horse

In this mini-series' conclusion, the immortal Manji is feeling less immortal all the time, what with the sacred blood worms that heal him about to kick the bucket from the poison of Shizuma, a samurai who's full of the medicinal maggots himself! As the two literally hack each other to pieces, only Rin, the young warrior under Manji's protection, can save her friend. This one has more blades than a mutant Swiss Army knife!

MANGA VIZION (VOL. 3) #6

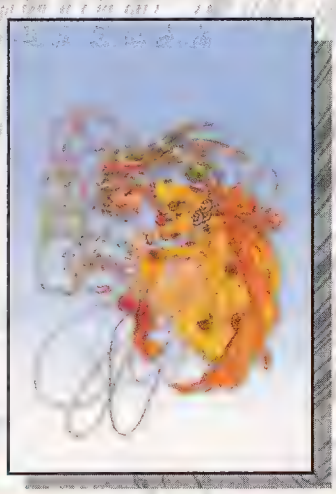
Viz Comics

North America's first and only monthly manga anthology begins a brand-new story, "Spriggan," which continues, under its original Japanese name, the action/adventure title originally released by Viz as *Striker* and *Striker: The Secret of the Berzerker*. "Spriggan" details the origin of its hero Yu Ominae, and how he learned to divide his time between high school and leading an elite special-forces unit!

OH MY GODDESS!: MARA STRIKES BACK #2 (OF 3)

Dark Horse

Good girls don't get much more good than the young goddess Belldandy, but bad girls don't get more bad than Demon First Class Mara! Bent on revenge, Mara's out to destroy Belldandy, her two sisters, her boyfriend Keiichi, and their strange (but happy) home! In this issue, Mara squares off against Banpei, a special anti-Mara robot constructed by the goddess. Can weird science defeat a witch's sorcery?



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By Joyce M. Steel

The Summer Explodes With "QFX"

The first card series to digitally merge photographs with artwork hits stores this June.

Bringing this set to you is Fleer/SkyBox in the form of *Premium QFX Trading Cards*. Melding the art of fan fave Joe Quesada (get the "Q" reference, ahem…) with reference photos he personally took in Manhattan for books like *X-Factor*, *Batman* and *Ash*, Fleer/SkyBox gives you special effects (the "FX" reference in case you didn't get it) like you've never seen in a card set before! The set includes 72 basic cards, nine Photographix Acetate cards (one card for every six packs or 1:6) and four Lazerblast Die Cut cards (1:9) (five cards per pack, suggested retail price $1.99).

99 CENT CARDS MAKE SPIDER-SENSE

If you thought *X-Men .99* was a great idea, there's more! *Spider-Man .99*, another vivid 50-carder filled with computer-generated imagery, character bios, power ratings and more, is on the way. You'll even get three *OverPower* collectible card game (CCG) cards and an *OverPower* mini-mag in every pack (eight cards per pack, suggested retail 99 cents).

A MARVEL-OUS REDEMPTION

Finally from Fleer, a public service announcement: If you're a lucky finder of a redemption card from last October's *Marvel Masterpieces* series, but are having trouble with the toll free number to cash it in for your original Boris Vallejo or Julie Bell art, I have a new number for you: (800) 290-0183. The original number was a misprint.

CARDS IN BLACK

From Hollywood, Inkworks plans a set based on "Men in Black," the sci-fi Steven Spielberg blockbuster coming this summer starring Tommy Lee Jones and Will Smith. The 90-card set contains the usual photographic stuff, along with some behind-the-scenes images and CGI (computer generated images). The set's chase cards were unpublished at press time (eight cards per pack, suggested retail $1.79).

'TICK'LE ME IMAGES

Next up, everyone's favorite crimefighting insect The Tick and his insane antics are featured in a 72-card series from Comic Images, chased by six Chromium cards (1:18) and 500 Autographed cards, signed by Tick creator Ben Edlund, randomly inserted in the run (eight cards per pack, suggested retail $1.50).

PAINTING COWS

Comic Images also teams up this month with Marc Silvestri's Top Cow Productions on *The Painted Cow*, a 72-card series mixing new and classic art from Top Cow's killer titles, like *Cyberforce*, *The Darkness*, *Weapon Zero* and *Witchblade*. Six Chromium cards (1:18) and 500 hand-signed Silvestri Autographed cards (randomly inserted) chase the series (eight cards per pack, suggested retail $1.50).

THE POPE DOES CARDS

If the surreal is your cup of tea, check out Comic Images' *THB & More* series, featuring the weird, wonderful art of comic sensation Paul Pope. The 72-card series boasts all-new art, and is chased by six Chromium cards (1:18) and 500 Pope Autographed cards, randomly inserted (eight cards per pack, suggested retail $1.50).

DEATH IS IN THE CARDS

Krome Productions spotlights the ravishing Lady Death in its debut Mega Chromium format. Chase cards include five State-of-the-Art Chromium cards (three per box) and five Second Chance Mega Chromium cards from Lady Death Series 3 (one full set per box, three cards per pack, suggested retail $2.50).

CCG UPDATE

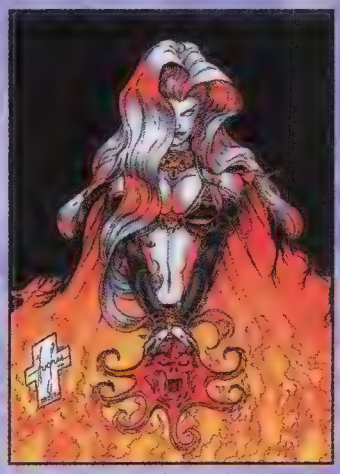
With CCGs getting hotter by the minute, let's finish out the month with some cool news on that front.

WildStorm expands again with *Legends*, a 150-card addition to the game that infuses new items, events, subplots and villains. Plus, it allows fans to opt for fast and solitaire play (15 cards per booster pack, suggested retail $2.25).

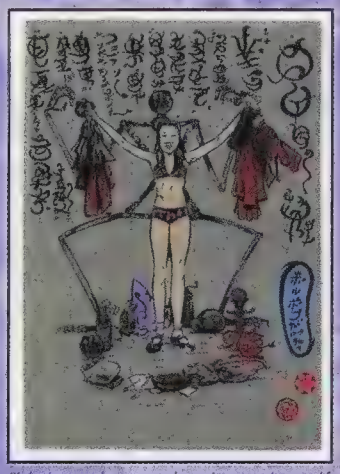
Finally, HarperPrism is planning a great new *Aliens vs. Predator* CCG based on the info in all three Alien and both Predator movies, which will hit stores this August. Check out next month's ish for the dish! W

Joyce Steel was approached by Fleer/SkyBox to do a SteelFX card series, but she lost her box of Crayola Crayons.

"…blah blah blah copyright statement blah blah blah trademark breach…damn! Marvel does own me!"
Spider-Man .99 cards



"Too…top heavy! Toppling…towards…flames!"
Lady Death card set



"I don't care what nature chose, I want to live my life as a woman! A woman!"
THB & More cards

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The Wizard Authentic program is a premium line of comics autographed by the top comic book creators! Each Wizard Authentic edition is packaged in a super-safe Mygard protector with an official Wizard hologram sticker and certificate of authenticity!

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ASH1H2S **1/2** (Signed) **$19.95**

Avengelyne
Signed Ace Edition
Signed by Avengelyne model and co-creator Cathy Christian!
AVLA1S **Ace** (Signed) **$19.95**

Capt. America
Limited Signed
This limited cover of issue 1 is signed by artist Rob Liefeld!
CAPN1LS **1** (Signed) **$14.95**

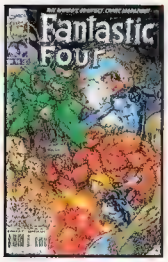
Chastity
Limited Signed
This rare edition of **Chastity 2** is signed by creator Brian Pulido!
CHAS2LS **2** (Signed)....**$19.95**

The 1st Ka-Zar!

This very rare **Wizard Ace** edition contains the first ever Marvel story from 1939 featuring the 1st appearance of the original Human Torch & Ka-Zar!

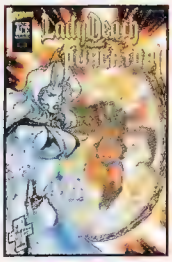
Now you can get a signed edition by new cover artist Glenn Fabry!

MCA1S **Ace 1** (Signed by Glenn Fabry).....**$19.95**



Fantastic Four
Limited Signed
This hot limited cover of issue 1 is signed by artist Jim Lee!
FFN1LS **1** (Signed) ..**$19.95**

Hulk -1
Limited Signed
This very scarce comic is signed by fan-favorite artist Adam Kubert!
HLKM1LS **-1** (Signed) ..**$19.95**



Lady Death vs. Purgatori Ace Signed
This hot new **Wizard Ace** is signed by cover artist Jim Balent!
LDPA1S **Ace** (Signed)..**$19.95**

Tales of Witchblade Gold 1/2 Signed
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WCA1S **Ace** (Signed)..**$19.95**

Witchblade Signed Ace Edition
Special acetate **Wizard Ace Edition** signed by artist Michael Turner!
WBA1S **Ace** (Signed)....**$29.95**

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____	CHAS2LS	**Chastity 2** (Very Limited - Signed by Brian Pulido)	**$19.95** = _____
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____	HLKM1LS	**Hulk -1** (Rare limited edition - Signed by Adam Kubert)	**$19.95** = _____
____	LDPA1S	**Lady Death/Purgatori Ace** (Signed by Jim Balent)	**$19.95** = _____

Quantity			
____	MCA1S	**Marvel Comics Ace** (Signed by Glenn Fabry)	**$19.95** = _____
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____	WCA1S	**WildC.A.T.S. Ace** (Signed by Scott Williams)	**$19.95** = _____
____	WBA1S	**Witchblade Ace** (Signed by Michael Turner)	**$29.95** = _____
		You must include Shipping & Handling (see chart)	= _____
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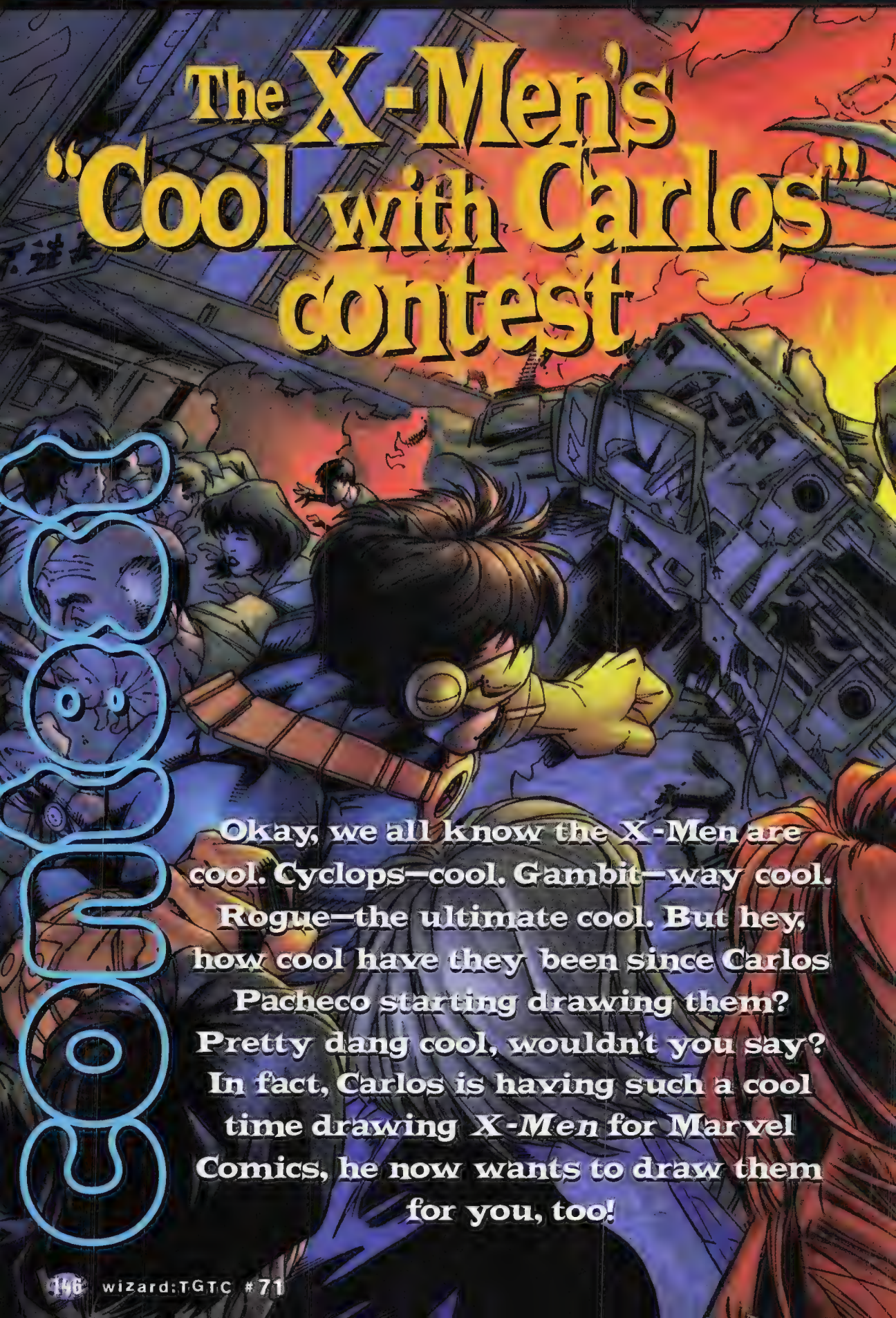
The X-Men's "Cool with Carlos" contest



Okay, we all know the X-Men are cool. Cyclops—cool. Gambit—way cool. Rogue—the ultimate cool. But hey, how cool have they been since Carlos Pacheco starting drawing them? Pretty dang cool, wouldn't you say? In fact, Carlos is having such a cool time drawing *X-Men* for Marvel Comics, he now wants to draw them for you, too!

HOLD THAT POSE, I GOTTA GRAB MY SKETCHBOOK.

OKEY-DOKEY, SMOKEY!

How to Engage in the Coolness:

This one's a cinch. Simply fill in the name of the X-character you think is the coolest on the entry form provided below and mail it in! If you win, Carlos Pacheco will draw your coolest character just for you! Sorry, kiddies, but winners are chosen by random drawing, not by their coolness factor.

Grand Prize (1):

One cool cat will receive an original drawing of his/her favorite *X-Men* character, drawn by none other than Carlos Pacheco! There ain't nuthin' cooler than that!

Second Prize (20): Twenty second prize winners will each receive a copy of the June 1997 *X-Men* issue, autographed by Carlos Pacheco! An icy-cool treat for any comic fan!

Fill this cool little sucker out, put it in an envelope and send it to: Cool with Carlos Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Deadline is July 31, 1997.

MARVEL COMICS

This contest is sponsored by Marvel Comics, a group as cool as Coolio.

Legal X-ceptions

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Marvel Comics, their immediate families or any fans of Artie and Leech. No prize for you! Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip, favorite X-Men character and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: Cool with Carlos Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. The Toad's mutant power was to jump like three times higher than a normal human. Pretty cool, huh? All entries must be received at contest headquarters by July 31, 1997. Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected randomly from among all properly completed entries by Wizard Press. Drawing will take place on August 15, 1997.

For a list of winners, available after August 15, 1997, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Cool with Carlos Contest Winners, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

"Cool with Carlos" Entry Form

DEADLINE IS JULY 31, 1997!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

Favorite X-Men Character _____

***Wizard*, by staying in touch with hundreds of retailers throughout the country, keeps a close eye on the country's hottest back issues. Here are May's hottest back issues.**

TOP 10 COMICS

1. WITCHBLADE #1

WRITERS: David Wohl, Brian Haberlin and Christina Z.
ARTISTS: Michael Turner and D-Tron

That's it. We're officially tired of this. This marks seven freakin' months in a row that *Witchblade* #1 has registered in the #1 or #2 slot in "Top 10 Comics." That means seven months in a row where we've had to spend a carefully crafted 110 to 125 words telling you everything you already know about *Witchblade* #1. You already know that Sara Pezzini, Witchy herself, is one hot tamale of a *superchica* who specializes in skimpy red dresses. You already know that Michael Turner is quickly becoming the hottest artist this side of Leonardo da Vinci. So move on to something else, already! We bet Casey Kasem doesn't have to put up with this. **LAST MONTH: 2**

2. JLA #1

WRITER: Grant Morrison
ARTISTS: Howard Porter and John Dell

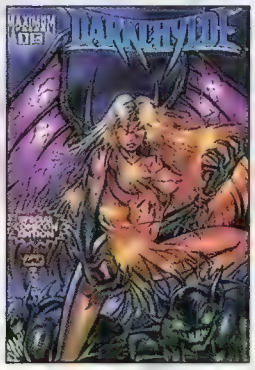
JLA is big! Real big! It's bigger than *Devil Dinosaur*! Bigger than Texas! Bigger than yer mama! So just how big is that in, like, quantifiable terms? Well, *JLA* #1 sold out so darned fast that DC Comics went into a second printing *in the same month* it came out! DC even collected issues #1-#4 of *JLA* into the *New World Order* trade paperback by the time issue #5 was out. Geez, we haven't seen such heat on a title since...well...since ever, maybe. Just goes ta show you that top-shelf characters and top-shelf talent can still make for a big hit book. No need for variant covers here. **LAST MONTH: 6**

3. THE DARKNESS #1 (BLACK VARIANT COVER)

WRITER: Garth Ennis
ARTISTS: Marc Silvestri and Batt

Speaking of variant covers, allow us to introduce you to our first of the month on this here list: The ever-happy *Darkness* #1 Black. So why do ya figure ol' Jackie Estacado (that's the Darkness to you and me) looks so sad on this cover? Is it because he knows this drawing only shows up on one of every four *Darkness* #1's? Or is it because he knows that as a consequence of his weird Darkness power, he could die if he has sex? Yeah, we thought so too. **LAST MONTH: 3**

NUMBER THREE



NUMBER FOUR

4. DARKCHYLDE #1

WRITER: Randy Queen
ARTISTS: Randy Queen, Jason Gorder and Marlo Alquiza

Ya really gotta wonder about the intelligence of super-types these days when it comes to choosing a secret identity. Take Ariel Chylde, f'r instance. One day she's just your average high school student with eyes as big as billiard balls and boobs as big as beach balls, and the next day, she's a demon portal-chick from Hell. So what's she call herself? "Darkchylde." Yeah, like no one's gonna make the connection between "Ariel Chylde" and "Darkchylde." Sheesh. Makes Clark Kent's glasses look smart by comparison. **LAST MONTH: 1**

NUMBER FIVE

5. WITCHBLADE #10 (DARKNESS VARIANT COVER)

WRITERS: David Wohl and Christina Z.
ARTISTS: Marc Silvestri, Michael Turner, D-Tron and Batt

Pretend you're Top Cow Comics. It's easy—just picture yourself with an udder, a big bell around your neck and lots and lots of drawing paper. You've got a top-selling book called *Witchblade* and you want to debut a hopefully top-selling character called "the Darkness" in issue #10. So what do you do to crank up the hype even more? Easy. You do a one-in-four *Darkness* #0 variant cover on the *Witchblade* issue. Then you sit back and count the money. See? Comics is easy. **LAST MONTH: 4**

6. PREACHER #1

WRITER: Garth Ennis
ARTIST: Steve Dillon

There are three schools of thought on *Preacher*: One group o' comic observers thinks that the title is nothing more than gratuitous sex and violence. They don't buy it. Another group thinks that it's one of the best-written, most realistically drawn comics available today. They buy the title. The third group just likes to see cats get flushed down the toilet and see armadillos get handled in a way that they probably weren't intended to. They buy the book also. Looks like groups #2 and #3 are winning. **LAST MONTH: 5**

NUMBER SIX

NUMBER SEVEN

7. FANTASTIC FOUR #1

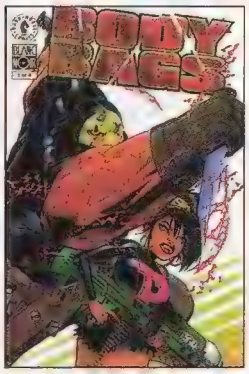
WRITERS: Jim Lee and Brandon Choi
ARTISTS: Jim Lee and Scott Williams

"Heroes Reborn." We can all agree that this controversial li'l Marvel reboot project has everyone talking about it and everybody watching it. And the title they've been watching more than any other? Why, *Fantastic Four*, of course. After all, the FF is the first family of the Marvel Universe, and even of the Heroes Reborn "pocket universe." And they've got that cool flamey guy and that cool rocky guy on the team. And that "Jim Lee" name carries a bit of weight, too. Guess that's why they're at the top of the 'Reborn heap. **LAST MONTH: 7**

8. BODY BAGS #1

WRITER: Jason Pearson
ARTIST: Jason Pearson

Surgeon General's Warning: *Body Bags* is not for the faint of heart. In this issue, we've got stabbings, nose cuttings-off, car explosions, ass-grabbings, punches in the face and a guy in a weird-looking smiley-face mask. Now while that might sound like an average weekend in Vegas for the Dallas Cowboys, it ain't the typical kinda stuff you usually find in funnybooks. But it does open the possibility for some real interesting crossovers. What if *Body Bags* met *Archie's Pal, Jughead?* Or *Sonic the Hedgehog?* The mind boggles. **LAST MONTH: NOT RANKED (N.R.)**



NUMBER EIGHT

NUMBER NINE

9. JLA #2

WRITER: Grant Morrison
ARTISTS: Howard Porter and John Dell

Pssst! Hey, you with the Batman T-shirt! Look at this list. Only three of the 10 books listed are superhero fare. The others easily fall into the general category of blood 'n' guts. Your counterpoint to the tide of gore and assorted body parts? Well, there's always the nifty death-defyin', cape-flyin', standin'-up-for-truth-justice-'n'-the American-way antics of the JLA, like those found in *JLA* #2. In this ish, they take on some nasty Martians. It may sound kinda plain, but it's pretty well done. Check it out. **LAST MONTH: N.R.**

10. HITMAN #1

WRITER: Garth Ennis
ARTIST: John McCrea

Now, *Hitman*, at least, is blood 'n' guts with a healthy dose of humor. In issue #1 alone, our hero Tommy Mongahan uses his X-ray vision to scope out the neighbor chick next door (good idea) and throws up his curry dinner on Batman's boots (bad idea). That Garth Ennis guy, twisted as he is, can be quite the funny fella. And John McCrea draws in a real distorted, quirky style that sure does look humorous on occasion. *Hitman* is the Reese's Peanut Butter Cup of comics—two great tastes that taste great together. **LAST MONTH: 9**

NUMBER TEN

THE NEXT TEN

THE NEXT 10 HOT BOOKS AND THE COMPANIES THAT MAKE THEM

11. PREACHER #2 DC
12. LEAVE IT TO CHANCE #1 HOMAGE
13. IRON MAN #1 MARVEL
14. WITCHBLADE #2 IMAGE
15. DARKCHYLDE #2 MAXIMUM
16. UNKNOWN SOLDIER #1 DC
17. FANTASTIC FOUR #2 MARVEL
18. SUPERGIRL #1 DC
19. ASTRO CITY #1 HOMAGE
20. S. IN PARADISE #1 HOMAGE

COMIC MARKET NEWS AND SUCH • by Lars Pearson

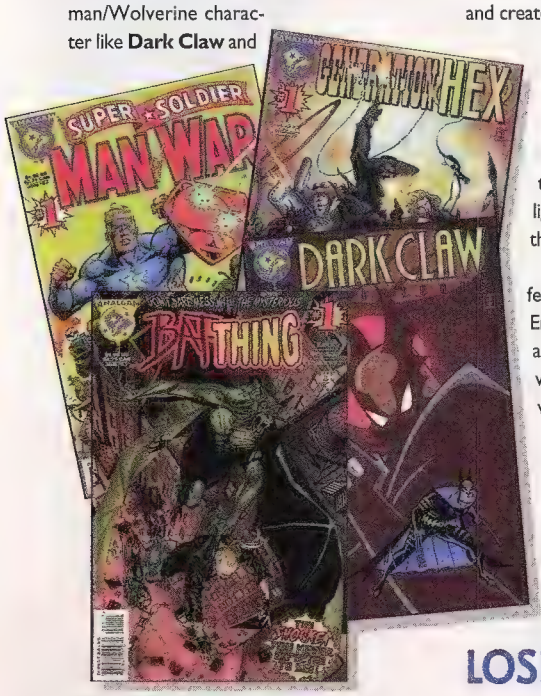
SECOND AMALGAM FAILS TO SCORE

"Good, but not great" is the best way to describe **Marvel** and **DC**'s second wave of 12 **Amalgam** one-shots, which literally combined several heroes from both publishers into new characters. Compared to sales of last year's Amalgam dozen, 1997's Amalgam receipts were really disappointing, and there were a few reasons for this.

First off, this year's Amalgams lacked the lead-in the 1996 books got from the media-hyped ***Marvel vs. DC*** crossover, in which characters from both comic universes battled each other before being combined into the Amalgam Universe. Many fans followed that four-issue storyline and ended up buying every Amalgam issue. This wave of Amalgams had no story lead-in to support it.

Also, Marvel and DC's choices for Amalgams were more questionable. With ***Generation Hex***, for example, a well-known mutant team like **Generation X** was crossed with the Western gunslinger **Jonah Hex**, a more obscure DC character. Some of the crosses weren't as commercial as last year's Amalgam heroes. There's a wide gap between a Batman/Wolverine character like **Dark Claw** and a Man-Thing/Man-Bat tandem like **Bat-Thing**. The strongest Amalgam characters were the ones who did well in 1996, especially Dark Claw, **Super-Soldier** (merging heavyweights like Superman and Captain America) and **JLX** (combining the superteams X-Men and Justice League). ***Iron Lantern***—meshing two popular heroes, Iron Man and Green Lantern, and written by fan-favorite **Kurt Busiek**—was also a surprise high-seller.

But because of the unexpected fan reaction, don't expect the second wave of Amalgam projects to show a big price hike in the near future.



Without *Marvel vs. DC*, Amalgam 2 fell short

ENNIS ON FIRE

If you haven't heard of the impact writer **Garth Ennis** has been having lately, you must have been living in the Savage Land.

It's obvious that *everything* he touches turns to gold. You can check off his hits at the register: DC's ***Hitman*** and ***Preacher***. Image's ***Darkness***. But what's mind-boggling is the way Ennis is currently scoring on low-key titles. There's lots of demand for his *Unknown Soldier* (DC/Vertigo) and creator-owned *Dicks* (Caliber). People are walking out of stores with his four-issue run of *Shadowman* (Acclaim) and ignoring the issues after it. The key to these lesser-knowns is that Ennis has either created the characters or been allowed to fiddle with lightweights like Unknown Soldier. And that's the way he plans to keep it.

"My ground rule is the less interference in my work, the better," says Ennis, on working with his own characters. "We've made *Preacher* stick by virtue of itself, rather than something with a history like Batman or Superman. As far as my deviating towards the mainstream, I hope it happens as little as possible. I didn't grow up with superheroes and don't have much affinity for them."

X-BOOKS LOSING STEAM

Uncanny X-Men and ***X-Men*** are still going strong, but X-books such as ***X-Force***, ***X-Factor*** and ***Excalibur*** are showing kinks in their armor, in terms of retailer sell-through and reader response. Perhaps one reason is that the two main X-Men books tell a story that's very detached from the others; barring crossovers, there isn't the sense of urgency to collect all of them.

Also, each of the spinoffs has its own unique troubles, say both readers and retailers. *X-Force* has lost key characters like **Cable** and Cannonball, and gained second-stringers like Caliban. Creator turnover has caused *X-Factor* to change direction and cast members so many times over the last few years, it's confused some people. *Excalibur* has the same problem, and characters such as **Nightcrawler** have evolved to the point where longtime readers don't recognize them.

For all of the reasons cited above, a lot of faithful X-readers are realizing that they've been buying the books to continue their collections, but not to *read* them. Those readers then just stick with the main X-books, *Uncanny X-Men* and *X-Men*, and skip the rest.

A possible bright spot is *Cable*, since **James Robinson**, a writer who attracts a Vertigo and superhero audience, has come on board the title. And it's too early to tell if Marvel's summer shakeup, "Operation: Zero Tolerance," will pump some life into the other X-books.

'BODY BAGS' MAKES FAST BREAK

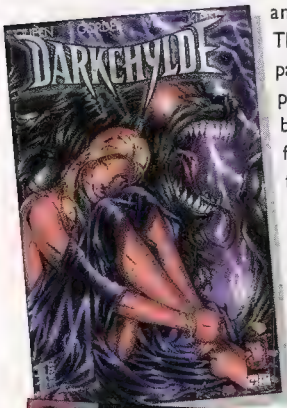
Dark Horse has racked up a sleeper hit with ***Body Bags***, a four-issue mini-series about a killer named **Clownface** and his young daughter **Panda**, who shows up on his doorstep in *Body Bags* #1. There's a lot of angst between the father and daughter, which readers can relate to, and the series' fans also love its eye-popping gratuitous violence. *Body Bags* was also low-printed and caught everyone by surprise, making it even more tasty to collectors.

Body Bags writer/artist **Jason Pearson**, whose work includes *Legion of Super-Heroes* and *Uncanny X-Men Annual* #17, says he knew from the start the book's violence would cause a lot of controversy. Pearson—who, like Ennis, has no desire to deal with mainstream characters—

says, "I'm particularly tired of some of the moral obligations that characters in the superhero worlds have to live by. You've got the nice bad guy or the honest villain. [*Body Bags*] is not a book about morals. It's a book about [Clownface and Panda] surviving."

TITLES TO WATCH

Darkchylde (Image), **Witchblade** (Image) and **JLA** (DC)—These still lead the pack. (Is anyone surprised by this?) Fanboys keep returning for the strong art from *Darkchylde*'s **Randy Queen** and *Witchblade*'s **Michael Turner**, and are interested in the series' strong female leads. Meanwhile, sales of *JLA* are rivaling *X-Men* in some stores.



Batman: The Long Halloween (DC)—Even though the other Bat-books have been experiencing a sales slump, this one is going strong. And now that Bat-sales are on the rise anticipating the "Batman & Robin" movie, *Long Halloween* is still making the fastest gains in readership—translating into heavy back-issue activity. Since this series revolves around the "Who is the Holiday serial killer?" mystery, fans will most likely stick this one out to the end.

Starman (DC)—DC's recent "Starman Month" did the title nothing but good. Because DC overshipped *Starman* #29 and #30, some retailers gave them away free and hooked new readers. As with *Long Halloween*, the new crowd wants the back issues, which were already showing heat anyway. The sleeper in the bunch might be *Starman* #11, which features one of the Justice Society's most horrifying cases.

Thunderbolts (Marvel)—Another title that's on the rise, mainly thanks to hot writer Kurt Busiek's presence, and the series' twist of having old Marvel villains (the Masters of Evil) masquerade as heroes. Marvel overshipped *Thunderbolts* #3 in the same way DC did *Starman*, so the title could gain even more readers. **W**

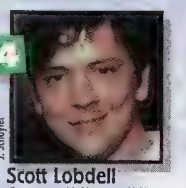
Lars Pearson has devolved to the point where even his family doesn't recognize him (or so they say).

Wizard's Top 10 Writers

1 **Garth Ennis**
Preacher, Hitman

2 **Mark Waid**
Ka-Zar, Flash

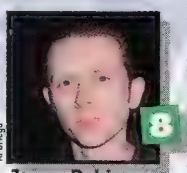
Al Ortega
3 **Peter David**
Hulk, Aquaman, Supergirl


J. Schuyler
4 **Scott Lobdell**
Generation X, Uncanny X-Men

Al Ortega
5 **Kurt Busiek**
Astro City

Bobo Martin
6 **Grant Morrison**
JLA

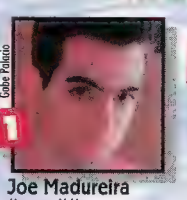
Al Ortega
7 **Frank Miller**
Sin City


Al Ortega
8 **James Robinson**
Starman; upcoming: Cable

9 **David Wohl**
Witchblade

Al Ortega
10 **Erik Larsen**
Savage Dragon

Wizard's Top 10 Artists*


Gabe Palacio
1 **Joe Madureira**
Uncanny X-Men

Al Ortega
2 **Jim Lee**
Fantastic Four

3 **J. Scott Campbell**
Gen13

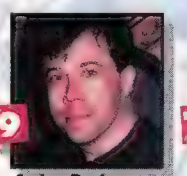
4 **Michael Turner**
Witchblade

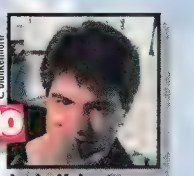
Al Ortega
5 **Alex Ross**
Upcoming: Uncle Sam

Al Ortega
6 **Joe Quesada**
Ash

Al Ortega
7 **Marc Silvestri**
The Darkness

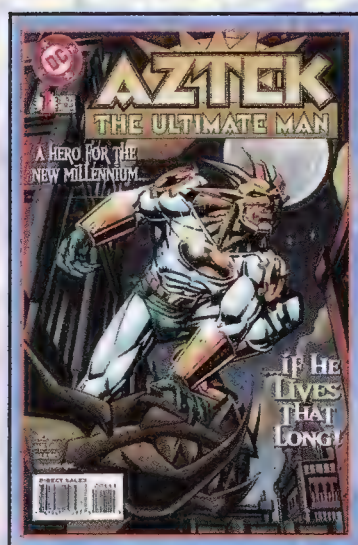
8 **Randy Queen**
Darkchylde


9 **Carlos Pacheco**
X-Men


C. Blankenhorn
10 **Andy Kubert**
Ka-Zar

*** Pencilers and painters**

***Wizard*'s Top Ten Professionals lists are derived from a nationwide retailer survey.**



Buried Treasure

Aztek: The Ultimate Man #1

Spotlighting an unbelievably naïve, overly trusting (even of supervillains) superhero with unique powers (including a neat helmet that makes your head go blooey if you wear it wrong), Aztek's debut was one of the shining moments of '96. And then DC canceled his title. *sigh* But now, with Aztek's exposure as a star of the insanely hot *JLA* title (thanks to its writer Grant Morrison, who also scribed *Aztek*), people are picking up the lightly printed back issues of this book (all 10 of 'em) and discovering how phenomenal they are. So, with Aztek maintaining a high profile in *JLA*, and sooooo many of those fans looking for the sooooo-hard-to-get *Aztek* back issues, we're about two seconds away from seeing that ol' "supply and demand" law put into monster effect.

WIZARD™ TOP 100

The highest-ordered comic books for the month of APRIL.

Compiled by the *Wizard* Price Guide staff, and working off the data supplied by comic book retailers across the country, the following is a listing of the highest-ordered comics for April. Check out the column on the right for an explanation of this month's standout books (listed in **boldface type**).

1. **Uncanny X-Men #345 (Marvel)**
2. X-Men #65 (Marvel)
3. **Fantastic Four #8 (Marvel)**
4. Spawn #61 (Image)
5. Wolverine #114 (Marvel)
6. **The Exciting X-Patrol #1 (Marvel)**
7. **Iron Lantern #1 (Marvel)**
8. **JLX Unleashed #1 (Marvel)**
9. Magnetic Men Featuring Magneto #1 (DC)
10. Challengers of the Fantastic #1 (Marvel)
11. **Spider-Boy Team-Up #1 (Marvel)**
12. Iron Man #8 (Marvel)
13. The Dark Claw Adventures #1 (DC)
14. **Super-Soldier: Man of War #1 (DC)**
15. Bat-Thing #1 (DC)
16. Thorion of the New Asgods #1 (Marvel)
17. Generation Hex #1 (DC)
18. Avengers #8 (Marvel)
19. Captain America #8 (Marvel)
20. Generation X #28 (Marvel)
21. **Lobo the Duck #1 (DC)**
22. X-Man #28 (Marvel)
23. X-Men Unlimited #15 (Marvel)
24. JLA #6 (DC)
25. X-Factor #135 (Marvel)
26. Gen^{13} #18 (Image)
27. X-Force #67 (Marvel)
28. **Curse of the Spawn #8 (Image)**
29. **Witchblade #14 (Image)**
30. **The Darkness #5 (Image)**
31. Cable #44 (Marvel)
32. Incredible Hulk #454 (Marvel)
33. Excalibur #110 (Marvel)
34. Amazing Spider-Man #424 (Marvel)
35. **Superman #124 (DC)**
36. **Action Comics #734 (DC)**
37. Peter Parker: Spider-Man #81 (Marvel)
38. **Adventures of Superman #547 (DC)**
39. **Superman: The Man of Steel #68 (DC)**
40. Cable and X-Force '97 (Marvel)
41. Spectacular Spider-Man #247 (Marvel)
42. Sensational Spider-Man #17 (Marvel)
43. **Batman/Aliens #2 (Dark Horse)**
44. **Deadpool #6 (Marvel)**
45. **Beast #2 (Marvel)**
46. Batman #543 (DC)
47. Gen^{13} Bootleg #6 (Image)
48. Detective Comics #710 (DC)
49. The X-Files #29 (Topps)
50. Batman: The Long Halloween #7 (DC)
51. Supergirl #10 (DC)
52. **Lady Death: The Crucible #4 (Chaos!)**
53. WildC.A.T.s #37 (Image)
54. **Preacher #26 (DC)**
55. Green Lantern #87 (DC)
56. Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight #95 (DC)
57. **Elektra #8 (Marvel)**
58. **Arcanum #2 (Image)**
59. Thunderbolts #3 (Marvel)
60. Batman: Shadow of the Bat #63 (DC)
61. Kurt Busiek's Astro City (vol. 2) #9 (Image)
62. Nightwing #9 (DC)
63. Darkchylde #1 Remaster (Image)
64. Batman/Wildcat #3 (DC)
65. **Crypt of Dawn #2 (Sirius)**
66. DV8 #7 (Image)
67. Catwoman #46 (DC)
68. The Flash #126 (DC)
69. Robin #42 (DC)
70. Unknown Soldier #3 (DC)
71. Spider-Man Team-Up #7 (Marvel)
72. Untold Tales of Spider-Man #22 (Marvel)
73. Silver Surfer #129 (Marvel)
74. Venom: License to Kill #1 (Marvel)
75. What If? #98 (Marvel)
76. Star Wars: A New Hope Special Edition #4 (D.H.)
77. S. Wars: X-Wing R. S.: Req. for a Rogue #1 (D.H.)
78. The Tenth #3 (Image)
79. Weird War Tales #1 (DC)
80. Wonder Woman #122 (DC)
81. Cyberforce #33 (Image)
82. Daredevil #365 (Marvel)
83. Azrael #30 (DC)
84. Weapon Zero #12 (Image)
85. The Dreaming #13 (DC)
86. **Journey into Mystery #510 (Marvel)**
87. Hellshock #4 (Image)
88. Teen Titans #9 (DC)
89. WetWorks #28 (Image)
90. Impulse #26 (DC)
91. StormWatch #47 (Image)
92. Adventures in the DC Universe #3 (DC)
93. Aquaman #33 (DC)
94. Starman #31 (DC)
95. Superboy #40 (DC)
96. Hitman #15 (DC)
97. **Ka-Zar #2 (Marvel)**
98. Classic S. Wars: H. Solo at Stars' End #2 (D.H.)
99. Savage Dragon #38 (Image)
100. The Books of Magic #37 (DC)

AT THE TOP:

While the chief X-books continued their one-two punch, *Fantastic Four* made Top 10 news by surpassing *Spawn* in order amounts for a third time, and cementing its position as the most successful "Heroes Reborn" title. Maybe Marvel should keep *FF* in "Reborn" mode past #12. This month's big event, the second round of Amalgam books, wasn't too big sales-wise or eventful in retailers' eyes—even *X-Patrol* wasn't able to bring down major books like *Wolverine* and *Spawn*. However, *Iron Lantern* was a surprising success, beating the popular *Spider-Boy* and *Super-Soldier* (each of which still did well)— a feat likely due to fan interest in its writer, Kurt Busiek (its being drawn by ex-X-artist Paul Smith didn't hurt, either). Mirroring the usual Top 100 chart in general, Marvel's releases fared much better than DC's (*Lobo the Duck* didn't even make the Top 20); in this case, retailers might've taken more notice of the Marvel 'gams as they were ordering their regular X- and Spidey titles.

IN THE MIDDLE:

As its popularity steadily increases, *The Darkness* is sneaking up to *Witchblade*...and both titles may soon overtake *Curse of the Spawn* on the chart. Although the dozen Amalgams pushed most comics down a few notches this month, there are some notable chart happenings: Thanks to his new-look revamp, Superman's numbers continue to top Batman's. More surprisingly, *Batman/Aliens #2* beat all the Bat-books...is this a calling for more explosive, grand-scale Bat-stories, or for the Dark Horse book's writer, Ron Marz, to take on the Dark Knight? Marvel's solo mutant books are still going strong: *Deadpool* continues to be a sleeper hit, and *Beast #2* did considerably well, not dropping too far from issue #1's ranking.

IN THE SECOND HALF:

A number of "dark books" kept their solid chart footing this month, including *Lady Death, Preacher* and *Arcanum*, while Sirius still has a popular star in Dawn, and Marvel's Elektra actually bucked the Amalgam-pushing trend and moved up five notches, showing she's gaining new readers. "Heroes Reborn" made Loki popular again, and his return to the Marvel universe in *Journey into Mystery #510* made the issue a strong seller. However, *Ka-Zar's* return isn't meeting the high sales expectations its creative team—Mark Waid and Andy Kubert—fostered; its lack of success might be due to retailers' lack of confidence in the book's staying power in today's still-overfilled market, as well as the still-low-profile status of the book itself.

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BULL PEN

C.B.I.Q.

Games, puzzles and stuff that'll tickle your fummy with the taste of nuts and honey

comic book intelligence quotient

Mort of the Millennium the Scarlet Spider welcomes you to the Miscellaneous *Wizard* Fun Section

This month, your immense but useless knowledge of comics will be rated against ultraoriginal, 1970s, urban African-American superdudes that didn't quite make it into the mainstream superhero universe.

Score	Rank
0-4	**Black Goliath.** His name was stupid and his costume showed off his bellybutton; need we say more?
5-14	**Black Talon.** Anybody brave enough to dress up as a chicken must be one bad mutha.
15-19	**Brother Voodoo.** He would take a "potion" and enter a trance-like state. On Friday nights most of us do the same thing.
20	**Jive Turkey.** Believe it or not, Jive appeared in *Pizzazz Magazine* and was probably created by some suburban white guy that watched one too many episodes of "Starsky and Hutch."

1. Before Batman came along, who protected Gotham City from evil?
A) The Reaper
B) The Goth
C) The Black Phantom
D) Fidel, the Latino Fist

2. Which of the following mutant freaks aren't related?
A) Mystique and Nightcrawler
B) Prof. X and Legion
C) Forge and Warpath
D) Husk and Cannonball

3. What's the name of the mangy mutt that Foggy Nelson gave to Matt Murdock, a.k.a. Daredevil?
A) Ace
B) Deuce
C) Rex
D) Dave

4. Which character from the original "Star Trek" series did not appear in an episode of "Star Trek: The Next Generation"?
A) Sulu
B) Spock
C) Scotty
D) McCoy

5. Which of the following teams did Captain America's joy boy, Bucky, belong to?
A) Kid Commandos
B) Invaders
C) Liberty Legion
D) He belonged to all of the above. Hey, he got around.

6. Besides Savant, which other WildC.A.T.s member belongs to Savant Garde?
A) Spartan
B) Zealot
C) Majestic
D) Voodoo

7. When Mary Jane found out the Chameleon was impersonating her hubby Peter Parker, what weapon did she use to beat him up?
A) a high-heeled shoe
B) a golf club
C) Peter's spare web-shooter
D) a baseball bat

8. Right after she divorced Hank Pym, which Avenger did the winsome Wasp date?
A) Hawkeye
B) Black Knight
C) Hercules
D) Iron Man

9. Who's the fleet-footed mentor of that speeding delinquent, Impulse?
A) Flash
B) Max Mercury
C) Johnny Quick
D) Speedy Gonzalez

10. What did *Body Bags'* Clownface put in the hands of his daughter, Panda, when she was in the hospital recovering from being beaten, shot, blown up and thrown off a tall building?
A) a stuffed panda in a bag and a note that said, "Keep on a-baggin' "
B) a grenade with its pin pulled out and a note that said, "Don't move!"
C) a gun with a note that said, "Welcome to Hell"
D) a spiggot for her colostomy bag

11. Which Justice Society member didn't die during *Zero Hour*?
A) Atom
B) Hourman
C) Dr. Mid-Nite
D) Starman

12. After recently leaving the X-Mansion to get back into "real life," where'd Wolverine find a place to live?
A) Ontario, Canada
B) Manhattan, New York
C) Brewster, Massachusetts
D) Congers, New York

13. What alien race deviously plotted to destroy the meta-humans on Earth during the *Invasion!* plotline?
A) Daxamites
B) Khunds
C) Dominators
D) the Hale-Boppers

14. What limitation does Jackie Estacado's Darkness power have?
A) The Darkness won't work in daylight.
B) Silver daggers can penetrate the Darkness.
C) The Darkness' power can be turned off if the words "Caltriti Sic" are uttered.
D) It's only neat when Garth Ennis writes about it.

15. Just who did those devious Thunderbolts really turn out to be?
A) the Masters of Evil
B) Avengers from an alternate reality
C) Proctor and the Gatherers in disguise
D) Ultraverse villains

16. What is so ironic about the father of Magnus: Robot Fighter?
A) His name is Quicksilver, and he's named after the son of the Marvel Universe's Magnus, a.k.a. Magneto.
B) He's a robot.
C) MRF's dad is actually his time-traveling grandson.
D) His dad was the scientist that created the first of the sentient robots that he must destroy in order to save mankind.

17. What did Bobby Drake, a.k.a. Iceman, major in at college?
A) genetics
B) physics
C) psychology
D) accounting

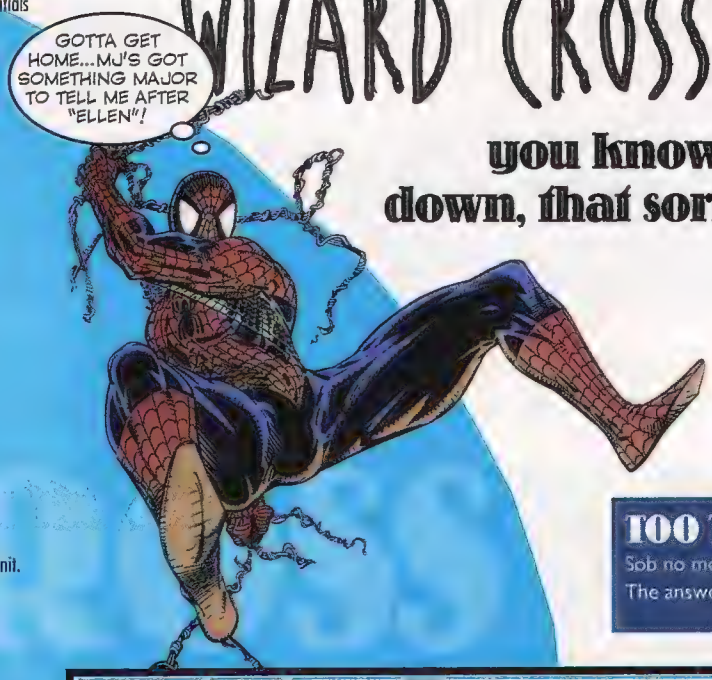
18. Which Event Comics character did The Darkness have an extremely violent team-up with?
A) Ash
B) Kid Death
C) Thrax
D) Painkiller Jane

19. Which of the following mutant freaks aren't related? (We know we already asked this question, but there're just too many damn relatives in the X-universe!)
A) Mojo and Longshot
B) Black Tom Cassidy and Banshee
C) Bishop and Shard
D) Northstar and Aurora

20. Before he became a vampire and started hanging out with preacher Jesse Custer, what was Cassidy's line of work?
A) He raised sheep just outside of Dublin.
B) He was an Irish rebel fighting the damn limeys before Ireland got its independence.
C) He was a doctor at a major hospital until he was ironically fired for stealing blood that was actually stolen by the vampire who would eventually turn Cassidy into a vampire.
D) He was a talented cattle rancher.

WIZARD CROSSWORD

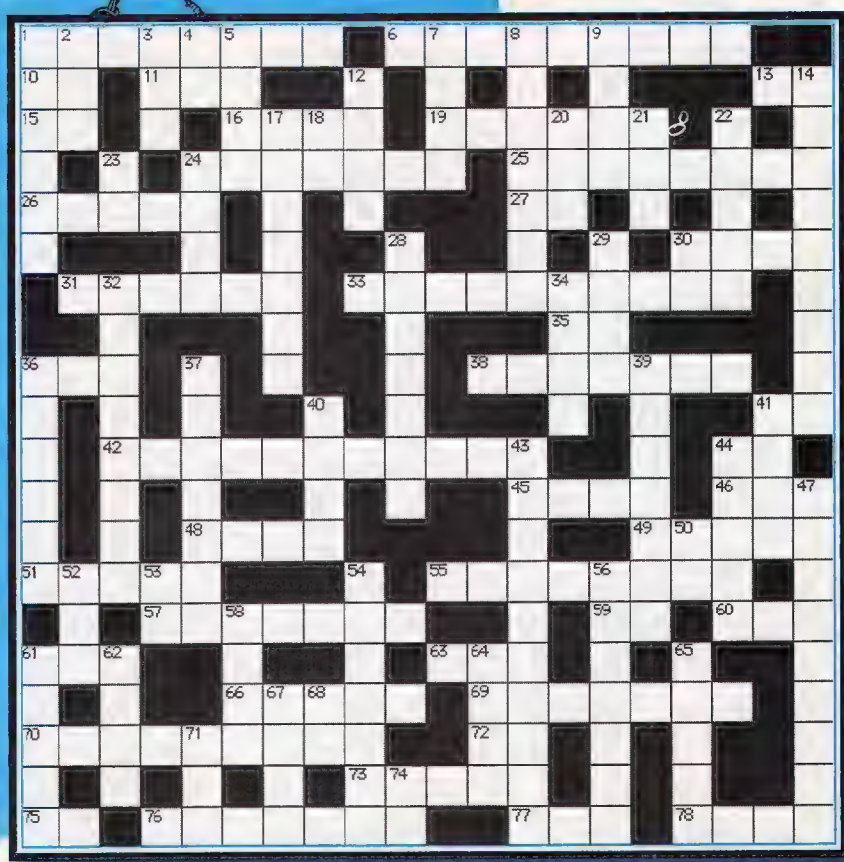
you know, across, down, that sort of stuff



TOO TOUGH?
Sob no more.
The answers are on page 214.

1. Man of Energy
6. Daredevil's weapon
10. drew *Troublemakers'* predecessor; initials
11. "I say thee ____!"
13. web-shooter; init.
15. "Who ___ Donna Troy?"
16. Vampi and Morbius like to do this
19. ex-JLAer Obsidian's best friend
24. central "Zero Tolerance" figure
25. Top Cow's abstinent avenger
26. Han Solo's betraying buddy
27. *Beavis & Butt-Head* creator; init.
30. Batman, Lobo writer _____ Grant
31. Thunderbolts member M.A.C.H. 1
33. "Great shades of Elvis!"
35. Gen[13]'s opposing organization
36. new Supergirl's old nickname
38. hottest Lois Lane yet
41. *Justice League Europe* artist; init.
42. Cybernary is one
44. Jonathan Kent, to Clark
45. Son of Thunder
46. "mini-series within a series"
48. Adam Strange's home
49. Changeling's dad
51. The Living ____
55. Spock's powerful ability
57. son of Darkseid
59. took on *Kid Eternity* after Morrison; init.
60. Pratt and Simmons
61. Johnny Storm is Sue's ____
63. new Nightwing foe Lady ___
66. Bane comes from _____ Prisca
69. DC time villain
70. piloted 26 across' ship
72. Guardian home
73. Shaq's film role; John Henry _____
75. female Wildcat; init.
76. Blue Devil's weapon
77. Vulcans rarely ___
78. "Up, up and ____!"

1. Captain America's weapon
2. ___ *Enterprise*
3. *World Without* ____
4. longtime Wonder Woman artist; init.
5. Legion's witchy woman
7. DC writer _____ Velez Jr.
8. led All-Star Squadron; _____ Belle
9. the Lizard, or the Lizard King's enemy
12. stretchy Generation Xer
14. Cassidy the Vampire's first name
17. John Walker
18. Bouncing Boy; init.
20. Titans hanger-on Lilith has this
21. *Mirrorworld* writer ___ Williams
22. Domino-loving future X-Man
23. StormWatch works for this
24. silent member of 32 down; Black ____
28. tracks down mutants
29. Spidey's new buddy
30. *Optic Nerve* creator; init.
32. they live on Mount Olympia
34. *The Trouble* _____ *Girls*
36. the Ideas House
37. Kaizen's island
39. Katar and Carter
40. JJJ's son
41. "*¡Ay, caramba!*"
43. very annoying young Titan
44. Clownface's daughter
47. Cyborg blew up this town
50. Superman's original house
52. Excalibur nemesis Black ___
53. 1974 Marvel giveaway's stuntman; init.
54. America or Atom
56. Acclaim's X-O _____
58. *Witchblade*'s Buzanis
61. Captain America's sidekick
62. Skywalker's uncle
64. cornerstone Milestone hero
65. X-Men doc; _____ MacTaggert
67. turned Wayne pal to Batman foe
68. early *Teen Titans* artist; init.
71. what Clark's is in the Image Universe
74. wrote *All-Star Squadron*; init.



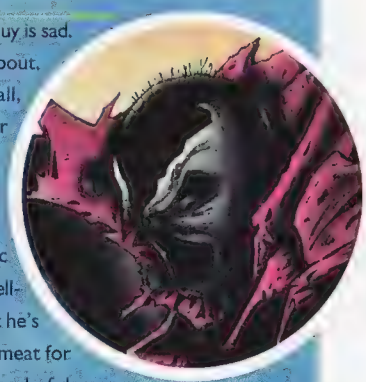
TOP 10 HEROES & VILLAINS OF THE MONTH

This list doesn't track the number of copies which a specific character sells each month. It doesn't pay attention to any kind of sales meter. This list is a roster of the 10 comic book characters with the strongest fan following—nothing more, nothing less.

1) WOLVERINE

Hmmm. Wolverine's in the top slot yet again this month. Let's see why he's so popular. What does he have going for him, anyhoo? Well, he's short. He's hairy. He's Canadian. He's given to occasional wild bursts of extreme violence. He's a tough-talkin', wilderness-walkin', take-no-crap-from-man-woman-child-or-small-mammal kind of guy. All these traits are also shared by former professional wrestler Maurice "Mad Dog" Vachon, but Mad Dog's nowhere to be found on this list. Just goes to show ya that being an X-guy will get you farther in life than being a tag-team world champion.

2) SPAWN



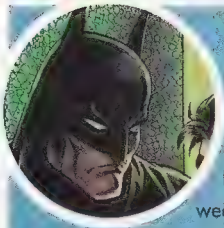
Awww, look. L'il Spawny-Guy is sad. What he has to be sad about, we have no idea. After all, he's the focus of a major movie coming out later this year and a cartoon series from HBO. He's got one of the top-selling comic titles and one of the top-selling toy lines out there. But he's also got a hunk of rotting meat for a face, a bizarre brotherhood of demons lookin' to kill him, and rumor has it he's got a case of underwear-up-your-buttcrack syndrome that just won't quit. Maybe that's why he's lookin' so glum.

3) WITCHBLADE

How can Sara Pezzini, the woman who holds the Witchblade, like, totally combat evil and stuff when her hair's fallin' in her face? That can't be healthy. Picture this scenario: She's battling bad guys and stuff, kickin' ass and takin' names when—WHAP!—she gets cuffed in the side of the head by a giant flounder hurled by FishFace, Nasty Master of the Ocean Depths. She gets a concussion and has migraines for weeks. As a result, the whole Top Cow Universe collapses. And all this could have been avoided with a simple headband. Maybe a baseball cap. A doo-rag. When are these heroes gonna learn?

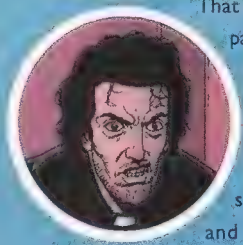
4) SPIDER-MAN

Hey! You can't do that! You can't have Spider-Man's mask squint! It's a mask. And why is that mask squinting? Is the sun too bright? Is Spidey doing one of those Clint Eastwood stares-into-the-sun? Or is the artist just trying to convey emotion on the face of a character who wears a full, expressionless facemask? We don't know. But we do know this here Spider-Guy is one of the most popular hombres in comicdom, and is now the star of the new monthly *Marvel Team-Up* title. Personally, we'd like to see Spidey team up with Squirrel Girl. More on squirrels later.



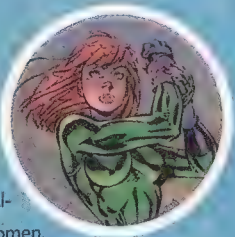
5) BATMAN

Y'know, Batman could use a little cheering up. He's always got that sour, way-too-serious look on his face, like he hasn't taken a good crap in three weeks. We think he needs a little pick-me-up. So maybe you should send him a little something just to let him know you're thinking 'bout him. A bouquet of flowers? A fruit basket, perhaps? Maybe a big tarp to keep all the guano off his detective-type equipment in the Batcave.



6) PREACHER

That Jesse Custer guy (Preacher to you, pardner), is one popular fella these days. But then again, you'd be popular too if you were a defrocked (Damn, but we love that word! Sounds dirty.) minister who gets to hang around with a supermodel-looking assassin girlfriend and a drunken Irish vampire. And you wouldn't have to worry about popularity if you had The Word, a funky little ability to make anyone do whatever you say. Jesse's got it all. Lucky guy.

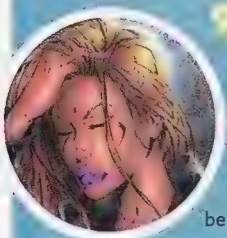


7) FAIRCHILD

Remember a few years ago when science geeks at some egghead school took a Barbie doll, measured it, extended the measurements out to the height of an average woman and realized that Barbie dolls could never be women, 'cause they're impossibly proportioned? Well, meet Caitlin Fairchild. From the looks of it, she's about 6'3", but her legs are 48-inches long. Where's she buy her pants? Maybe she can't wear pants, and that's why she's always wearing that unitard thing. And what would *Cosmopolitan* think?

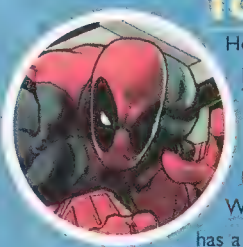
8) SUPERGIRL

She's new! She's different! She's still blonde! This ain't your father's Supergirl patrolling the streets of Leesburg these days. She's an alien who merged the protomatter (the squishy stuff she's made of that looks like chewed-up bubble gum) of her form with the body of a wounded Linda Danvers to save Danvers' life. Now Danvers and the alien are one. It's like having two brains in one body. There's more potential for zany hijinks here than in an average episode of "Three's Company."



9) DARKCHYLDE

If Farchild's proportions are impossible, then Darckchylde's must be double-secret impossible with a cherry on top. We think, that were Ms. Ariel Chylde a real person, her measurements would be 36D-12-34. That just wouldn't work, not even with all the corsets and implants in the world. You'd have to defy the laws of physics to make her. You'd have to build her out of anti-matter. It's a good thing she's a comic character, and thus just made of paper and ink.



10) DEADPOOL

Hey! Deadpool's mask is squinting, too. How do they do that? We still don't know, but one thing we do know is that we're glad ol' Deadpool wears a mask. Y'see, word on the street is that Wade Wilson (that's Deadpool, kiddies) has a kisser that looks like someone set it on fire, and then beat it out with a football cleat. His face has rarely been shown, which probably has a lot to do with his popularity. Keep it covered, baby.

MORT OF THE MONTH

Now it's time to look at the lamest character of the month, or, as we like to call 'em, the Mort of the Month!

CH'P

Dear God, affirmative action has gone too far. Weren't the Green Lantern Corps supposed to be the guardians of the universe? Were they not entrusted to keep all lifeforms safe from evil-doers everywhere? And they sent a friggin' squirrel into the endless battle against evil? Think about it: If you were some bad-ass crime guy, would you be scared of a 1' 9", 22-pound rodent? Named Ch'p? WITH A BOWTIE? We didn't think so. The only good thing this little Mort ever did was die in great roadkill fashion: He was splattered by a truck in *Green Lantern: Mosaic #2*. Hoo-ray.

BULL PEN

DC Jeopardy!

For years, *Wizard* Copy Editor Marc Wilkofsky prided himself as the resident DC Comics trivia expert. Then along came Scott Beatty, editor of the soon-to-be-monthly *ToyFare* mag, claiming he was the rightful wearer of the crown. As that rivalry began to boil over, enter new Wizard Price Guide Manager Lars Pearson, timidly touting his own DC horn. So, in an effort to expose the trio to semi-public ridicule, a makeshift game show stage was rigged (complete with buzzers, judges table, timekeepers, etc.) and the contestants had at it! As MC'ed by our very own Jim McLauchlin (see below), the combatants had to be the first to buzz in with the right answers to such brain-scratchers as "Who were the crew of the Scanner-I?" (Atari Force), "What does white Kryptonite do?" (kills all plant life) and "How do you spell Mxyzptlk?" (pronounced "Dave"). After 30 high-stress minutes and a three-way score of 41-31-22, the DC crown (and the robe we stole from Jim Lee's hotel room last year) was awarded to...Scott "Toyboy" Beatty! (With Marc pulling in last place.) Scott summed up his win best with: "I live the dream of every comic fan: I work at Wizard Press, I'm the king of DC trivia and I've got Jim Lee's robe. I can die happy."

THE KING OF STING, THE MASTER OF DISASTER, THE SULTAN OF SWAT...SCOT "MASTER" BEATTY!

One of the Damned

Jim McLauchlin

senior staff writer, *Wizard: The Guide to Comics*

What is it you do at *Wizard*?
I write until my fingers fall off—close to 20 pages of *Wizard* a month, including "Magic Words," chunks of news, a feature a month, "Top 10 Heroes and Villains," "Top 10 Comics," various captions and assorted tidbits. I also make people paranoid by writing down their out-of-context quotes, which I can blackmail them with later.

Illustration by Jim Cubby

Your favorite section in *Wizard*?
I still love "CBIQ"—it's always a lot of fun.

What surprised you most about the Wizard offices?
When I started here, I was working on *Collector's Sportslook*, and my office was a closet in the building's warehouse, 6' wide by 18' long. There were four of us in the "office," with no heat and no room to fart. It was insane.

Favorite "Magic Words" letter of all time?
The one by the guy who asked how to be a comic book "drawer"—people still ask me about that one.

Favorite movies of all time?
"Slap Shot"—a very hilarious, very realistic portrayal of minor league hockey—"The Blues Brothers" and "Outlaw Josey Wales."

Favorite TV shows?
All-time: "WKRP in Cincinnati." Currently, "Headline News"—I can't live without news, and I lust for Toria Tolley.

Favorite musical performers?
Neil Young, Bob Mould, The Who, The Kinks, Hank Williams and Miles Davis.

Favorite comics right now?
Sandman Mystery Theatre is my favorite, because it's a comic about characters who act like real people, and any heroics are strictly the backdrop. I also love *Astro City*, *House of Secrets*, *Stray Bullets* and *Preacher*.

Favorite single comic issue of all time?
Daredevil #179; its story, entitled "Spiked," had wonderful pacing, tremendous graphic storytelling, and the ending just gets you.

WIZARD TOP TEN

Top 10 best things that came out of 'Heroes Reborn'

10.
9.
8.
7.
6.
5.
4.
3.
2.
1.

CONTEST WINNERS

BOOKSHELF O' COMICS, *Wizard* #66: Chris Ridenour, Berrien Springs, Mich.

EVIL ERNIE, #66: Drawing category: Chris Ahn, Aiea, Hawaii; baking category: David Wooden, Tekonsha, Mich. Here's David's megayummy entry!

SIN CITY, *Wizard* #66: Mark Bloom, Chicago, Ill.

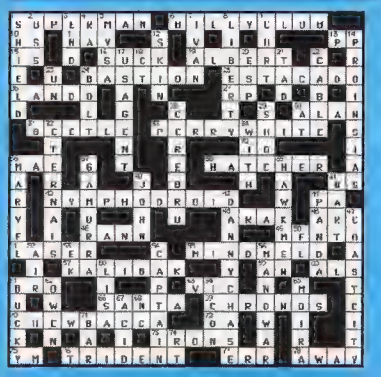
C.B.I.Q. answers...

from page 210

1. A	5. D	9. B	13. C	17. D
2. C	6. C	10. C	14. A	18. D
3. B	7. D	11. D	15. A	19. A
4. A	8. D	12. B	16. B	20. B

CROSSWORD answers...

from page 211



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WIZARD profile

Here's looking at...

JACKIE CHAN

Some may call him insane, but Jackie Chan takes pride in doing his own movie stunts, no matter the consequences.

"I will continue to make movies until my body tells me not to," says Chan, the comedic martial artist who has broken almost every bone in his body while on the job. "I can show audiences that that was really me [on screen], not a double!"

Despite the danger involved, the Hong Kong resident delights at the idea of performing his own radical stunts and compares himself to American actor Buster Keaton. "In moviemaking, I'd say Buster Keaton [is my inspiration] because he has my same trademark of no stunt doubles," says the 43-year-old Chan. "When performing stunts, I still get very scared. But doing my own stunts makes me feel proud of myself."

At the age of 7, Chan began learning martial arts at the China Drama Academy in Hong Kong, spending 10 years there. Upon graduating, Chan ventured into the Hong Kong movie scene with minor roles in numerous "kung fu" films ("Not Scared to Die," "All in the Family"). Throughout the '70s, Chan's on-screen persona began to develop as film producers sought the "next" Bruce Lee. However, Chan's early movie productions waned in the eyes of the public. "After the death of Bruce Lee, everybody tried to follow Bruce's style," he says. "I didn't want to be under his shadow for the rest of my career, and that's when I tried the comedy action films."

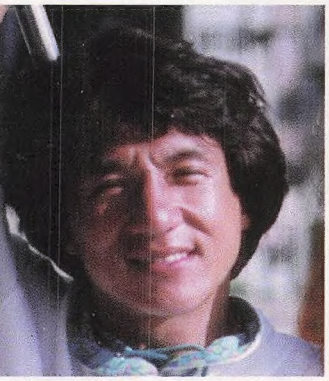

Photo courtesy of Topps Comics

With his first comedic martial arts performance in "Snake in the Eagle's Shadow," Chan caught the attention of the Chinese public and revolutionized the "kung fu" movie by creating a new genre of film, the martial arts comedy. Tweaking his performance to display more of his lighthearted off-screen personality, Chan launched himself into stardom in the now-classic 1978 movie "Drunken Master." Entering the 1980s, Chan's immense box-office success in Hong Kong expanded, sparking a series of appearances in American films like "The Big Brawl" and "The Cannonball Run."

After over a decade of unparalleled success in Asia with franchises on such properties as "Police Story," "Armour of God" and "Project A," Chan is now taking America by storm. Having released "Rumble in the Bronx," "Supercop" and "Jackie Chan's First Strike" already, Chan is gearing up for the American release of the 1991 film "Operation Condor," hitting U.S. theaters this fall.

Currently, Chan is shooting his next film, "Who Am I," on location in South Africa and Holland. In addition, Topps Comics will publish *Jackie Chan: Spartan X*, a new comic book series based on the actor's screen persona. Chan will co-plot the mini-series with Michael Golden (*Micronauts*, *Punisher*) and Topps editor Renee Witterstaetter. While *Spartan X* is an original concept, the premise of the series features a similar character to Chan's carefree adventurer in "Operation Condor."

"Renee Witterstaetter is a good friend of mine," notes Chan. "When she first mentioned the idea of publishing my own comic book, I was delighted. I thought it'd be fun to have my first comic book."

By Matthew Senreich

First comic read...
I'm too busy to read any comics, but sure will find time to read my own when it comes out! [*Laughs*]

Favorite work of your own...
My favorite work is yet to come. But to answer the question now, I will pick "Miracle."

The one person you'd like to meet...
President Clinton

Favorite toys...
My favorite toys would be the cameras I use for shooting movies.

Things you collect...
Antique cups and saucers

Favorite cartoon character...
Mickey Mouse

Person you would most like to work with...
I would like to work with director Steven Spielberg.

Favorite musical performer...
Barbara Streisand

Favorite TV show...
"60 Minutes"

Last good movie you saw...
"Schindler's List"

Last good book you read...
I don't read many books, but I love reading *National Geographic*.

Favorite movie of all time...
"The Sound of Music"

If you had the power of The Beyonder...
I'd stop all violence in the world, and help all poor countries become strong and have no more starving children. W

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